THE TEACHINGS OF THE LITTLE FLOWER

REV. EDWARD F. GARESCHÉ, S. J.

The Teachings of the
Little Flower

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St. Theresa of the Infant Jesus
The Little Flower

The Teachings of the Little Flower

ST. THERESA OF THE CHILD JESUS
AND OF THE HOLY FACE

BY

REV. EDWARD F. GARESCHÉ, S.J.
M.A., LL.B.

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PREFACE

THE following pages were written at the earnest request of friends and clients of the Little Flower. Their purpose is reverently to bring into prominence certain of the teachings of this new Saint of God which seem most needed and salutary for our time. No one can doubt who reads the Autobiography of the Little Flower and who studies the extraordinary manifestations of devotion toward her, but that she has a providential part to play in bringing home to this age some of the sublime truths of God which our generation is most likely to forget.

It is to the Autobiography of this charming Saint and to the documents published with it through the solicitude and care of her sisters in religion that we refer the reader for fuller and completer details concerning her life and character. Whoever has read that book will find in the citations in these pages some of the fragrance of its charm. Whoever reads these chapters will wish, we trust, to peruse again and again the words of the Little Flower as set forth in full in her Autobiography.

As soon as that delightful book was published it was quickly translated into almost all the languages of the earth. Reading it or hearing of its contents the Catholic world was inspired with devotion to this angelic maiden. It is almost unbelievable how swift and widespread was the reverence paid to her and how marvelous the response she gave to her clients' prayers. The current press reports give us some surprising details. It is said that for ten years the pilgrims to her tomb have averaged four hundred daily of all nations and all manners of men. At the time of her canonization it was estimated that forty-four million pieces of literature concerning her had been published.

The diocese of Alaska has been put under her pro-

tection, so has the Apostolate of the Faith of the Catholics of Wales, together with many other charities and good works throughout the world. The new Cathedral of Monterey-Fresno has been dedicated to her. Vast crowds assembled at Rome both for her beatification and canonization. At the triduum of rejoicing for her beatification held at Lisieux, a hundred thousand persons attended and the Pope sent a legate to represent him. At her canonization in Rome, huge crowds besieged St. Peter's and the dome of the great basilica was illuminated as it had not been since the old days when the Pope was sovereign in Rome. The first month after her beatification one hundred and twenty-five apparent miracles of the first order were attributed to her.

The canonization of the saints is not for their benefit, but for our own. When the light of God's favor thus falls upon one of His servants, we may always suppose that the example of the canonized Saint is meant to bring us some special graces, to teach us some particular lessons. Each one may reflect and meditate on the teachings of the Saint which he finds most helpful. In these chapters we have given a series of personal appreciations of the lessons of the Little Flower which, it is hoped, may serve to bring home still more to many readers the meaning of her life and example. We have prefixed to the book, an account of a visit to Lisieux, so that the reader may visit in imagination the homes of the childhood and the religious life of St. Theresa.

In each following chapter we have given copious citations from the Autobiography of the Little Flower, translating these anew from the French. In these translations we have aimed at as close a fidelity as possible to the expressions and color of thought of the original.

E. F. Garesché, S.J.

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The Teachings of the Little Flower

CHAPTER I

THE TEACHING OF THE LITTLE FLOWER

THE ways of God are very wonderful, and the depths of His judgments are beyond the short reach of our human understanding. We know that His providence reaches mightily from end to end of His vast creation and orders all things sweetly so that all may co-operate for good to those who love Him. But when we try, with our dim sight, to penetrate the great designs of God, we are like a little child who strives to spell out the words of some great volume of learning, or like a poor savage who seeks, with untutored intelligence, to comprehend the details of some masterpiece of architecture or engineering.

Yet, ignorant as we are and small as is our intelligence, we can trace out from time to time some details of the great design whereby God rules His universe, and it is encouraging for us to catch these glimpses of God's ways. What we are able to see,

makes us aware of still greater depths and heights of mercy and of goodness, which exist indeed, but are beyond the scope of our weak vision.

It is so when we consider the life of the Little Flower and the wonderful privileges and graces, both before and after her death, by which God distinguished this simple and hidden maiden. Her story is now on the lips of everyone. Her countenance, in millions of copies of her portrait, is known throughout the world. The wonders which God has worked through her intercession, have gained for her a great multitude of friends and devoted clients. Though during life she was entirely hidden, first in the bosom of her family and then in the holy solitude of the cloister of Carmel, she has begun a life-after-death so singular and illustrious, that it would seem that God has some special lessons to teach the world through her example. So it is a holy and a profitable task to endeavor as best we can to learn God's lessons, to understand the meaning of His special providence and of the singular favors He has lavished upon St. Theresa of the Child Jesus and of the Holy Face, whom so many millions call to-day by the sweet name which she herself chose, "The Little Flower of Jesus."

When Divine Providence singles out some individual soul for great exterior glory, it does so because of some special purpose important to the Church. For the most part, God keeps the secrets of the saints until judgment day. Thousands upon thousands of holy men and women practise heroic

virtue in this life and depart it high in the friendship of God. Their souls, great in glory, will astonish our entranced vision in heaven for all eternity. But to this earth there comes not an echo of the song of their rejoicing. No gleam of the angelic brightness of their spirit shines through the portals of death to let us know how happy they are with God.

In regard to other holy persons, however, God acts quite differently. Perhaps while on earth they were little known and less noticed. Their virtues were hidden to a great degree from the eyes of men. Their good works were done obscurely. While they lived, no one dreamed of the eminence of honor to which God meant to bring them after they had died. It was only the divine favors showered down on the world through their intercession, the marvelous answers to prayer, the graces, the cures, the widespread reverence of the faithful, which revealed to the whole world how high these holy souls stood in the favor of God. Providence reversed in their favor the usual course of human greatness. The heroes of earth shine brightest while they live, and their fame goes dwindling down the centuries. For these heavenly heroes, God provides a greatness which is the consequence of His own wonderful favors and which continues to increase in splendor even after they themselves have long been dead to earth.

In such instances we naturally look for some special significance in the life of these holy ones. We

ask ourselves what particular message God means to give us through their glory. We search their history, and we find that their example teaches us something that we have special need to know, some lessons that the age requires and that will serve as an antidote to the existing forms of worldiness, error and folly.

What, then, is the lesson which God means to convey to us through the charming history of the Little Flower? To what end did He single her out from among many holy souls and scatter her hidden sweetness over the earth? Why has He given to her so singular a career among the consecrated virgins of our era? Surely the answer to these questions will be not only full of interest, but most profitable to us, for it will help us to learn from the Little Flower the lessons which God means her to teach us.

Let us briefly survey some of the striking characteristics of her career. While in life St. Theresa, though her character was sweet and charming, had few to know her and to love her outside the circle of her own family and her sisters in religion. Hers was a family life singularly tranquil, happy, pious and pure. She was surrounded by affection and kindness, and anyone who visits her home at Lisieux and looks upon the collection of her childish toys still preserved there, and the pleasant places in which her childhood was passed, must realize how happily she lived, cherished with great affection, guarded from the world.

In the cloister, also, her life ran tranquilly, to outward seeming, its deepest currents hidden even

from the eyes of her own Sisterhood. Here, indeed, we have two lessons of beautiful significance. The charm and holiness of Catholic family life, a life transfigured by Christlike Faith, Hope and Love, are brought deeply home to the reader of the Autobiography of the Little Flower. So, too, the merit and preciousness of the hidden life, of that existence of prayer and sacrifice so dear to the Heart of Christ, are given vivid illumination by her experiences. All her greatness, the merit she gained with God, the heroic beauty of her virtue, were the result of that inward life, hidden from mortal eyes and which yet formed her real existence, the substance of her days.

The realization of these two most needed and most significant truths, the holiness of Catholic family life, its happiness and charm, and the great significance and supreme importance of the interior life of the soul, is surely among the most precious lessons which God intends that we should learn from the story of St. Theresa.

But she herself declares that she has likewise a special message, a secret of sanctity to impart, much needed in these times and precious for little souls. We shall reverently trace, in ensuing chapters, the content of that teaching. It is not, indeed, in itself, a novel doctrine in the Church, but it gains special significance on her lips, and she instructs us by her example even more eloquently than in her words how we can come nearer to the Heart of Jesus in the

simple and childlike way which she learned from Him.

Now that the Church, after the careful weighing of all her writings and the thoughtful consideration of her life, has set the seal of approval upon her veneration, and has raised her to the honors of the altar, we may approach with a greater confidence the pleasant task of learning what she has to teach us. This maiden who, even had she lived, would barely have passed her fiftieth year, has already received those honors of the Church which are usually deferred for many decades, or even centuries.

The usual delays have been suspended in her favor; and this, we are told, is the consequence of the wonderful outburst of devotion and confidence which she has stirred up in every nation under heaven. From all parts of the world, so the tidings come, there were sent to Rome innumerable letters pleading for her canonization. With these came the accounts of spiritual and temporal favors obtained through her help which are so striking and so multiplied that they furnish an overwhelming evidence of her power with God.

Indeed, wherever one goes, one hears the name of the Little Flower, sees her pictures, piously venerated, learns of great works and enterprises which have been consecrated to her, or undertaken under her intercession. Great dignitaries of the Church have declared in spoken words and in print their gratitude for the evident favors received through her aid, and have expressed their confidence in her

power with God. Many good works have taken her name as a banner under which to wage their holy strife for charity and beneficence. In a word, throughout the whole world, such a sudden veneration and confidence has sprung up about the name and story of this hidden maiden as few periods of the Church's history can equal. Certainly we are justified in thinking that God's providence designs all these extraordinary events, all this unusual interest, confidence and devotion to guide us toward some singularly needed and timely lessons, some kind and helpful instruction which the example and the sayings of the Little Flower are singularly fitted to give to this particular age of the world.

To learn these lessons and to profit by the teachings of the Little Flower, we have only to use our intelligence to consider tranquilly and reasonably what is made known to us about the life of St. Theresa, by her writings, and by what is said of her by those who knew intimately this charming child, this talented and pious girl, this nun whose brief life encompassed so much of ardent desire, pure love and inward suffering.

The material is ready for our hands in the single volume in which the Carmelities of Lisieux have embodied the approbations of Bishops to the writings of the Little Flower, a brief historical introduction, the three sketches of her own life, written by St. Theresa at the order of her superior, the counsels and instructions given by her in her talks with her novices, the prayers which she wrote, her letters to her

sisters Céline, Pauline, Marie and Léonie, to her cousins and to two missionaries whom she called "her spiritual brothers." Then follow some hundred and thirty-four pages of poems; and, finally, the accounts of many favors received through the intercession of the Little Flower, that "Shower of Roses" which she promised to let fall from the heavens, then the story of her exhumation and the decree of the introduction of her cause for canonization.

Written on the fly-leaf of the copy which is before us as we write are the following words, *"Reverend Edward F. Garesché, S.J. Nous demandons à notre petite Sœur du Ciel d' être l' ange de votre ministère sacerdotal,"* or, in English, "We ask of our little Sister in heaven to be the angel of your priestly ministry." Then follow the signatures of the three sisters of the Little Flower who still live in the Community of the Carmel of Lisieux, Sister Agnes of Jesus (Pauline), Sister Marie of the Sacred Heart (Marie), and Sister Genevieve of the Holy Face (Céline). Her sister Léonie became Sister Françoise Theresa at the Visitation of Caen.

The sight of this page, with its touching prayer and significant signatures, brings back most vividly to the beholder a realization of the extraordinary swiftness with which the veneration and love of the Little Flower has penetrated to the utmost parts of the earth. All of these sisters were older than herself. She was the youngest of the family, born January 2, 1873. Had she lived until the moment

when we write these lines, she would have not yet completed her fifty-second year.

In that short space of scarcely more than half a century, she has passed through all the phases of a career of earthly holiness and heavenly power which astonishes us by its sudden brilliance. How seldom, even in those days when the process of beatification and canonization was much swifter than now, has any great servant of God achieved such sudden and world-wide veneration? Three of her own sisters in Carmel and one a nun of the Visitation at Caen, have waited on earth to witness the final glorification of their youngest sister, solemnly canonized during the year of Jubilee.

The precious writings of St. Theresa herself will always remain the authentic story of her spiritual life and the source from which pious souls will draw her teachings. But many a one will find it, we trust, a helpful and welcome service to dwell upon and emphasize the lessons of the Little Flower in such a way as to make it still easier to apply her teachings to our own lives and to the difficulties and problems, the opportunities and temptations, the trials and consolations of our own every day. To help the reader to this realization and thus to spread yet more abroad the sweet fragrance of the Little Flower, is the humble purpose of this book, lovingly dedicated to her honor.

CHAPTER II

THE HOME OF THE LITTLE FLOWER

THE places where the saints have lived and died, have been made holy by their presence and it is an instinct of pious hearts to love to visit or even hear of these dwellings of the saints. One comes to know them better by learning of their earthly surroundings. We have thought it interesting, therefore, and helpful for the purpose of these reflections, to describe a visit to Lisieux, the home of the Little Flower where she spent many happy days of her childhood and where all her religious life was passed in the Carmel of that pleasant town of Normandy.

It was at Alençon that the Little Flower was born, but after her mother's death and when she was still a little child, her father came to live at Lisieux. At Alençon nine children had been born to the pious parents, all dedicated to Mary Immaculate from the cradle and all given her name. These children were called Marie Louise, Marie Pauline, Marie Léonie, Marie Hélène, who died when she was four and a half years of age, Marie Joseph Louis, Marie Joseph Jean Baptiste, Marie Céline, Marie Mélanie Theresa, who died when she was three months old, and lastly Marie Françoise Theresa, our well beloved Saint

Theresa of the Child Jesus and the Holy Face. The two boys had both died at Alençon at a very early age, one when five months and the other when nine months old. So had two of the girls, Marie Hélène, and Marie Mélanie Theresa. Thus, five of the children accompanied their father to Lisieux and grew up there under his almost maternal care and watchfulness.

It was at Lisieux, then, that the Little Flower went through most of the experiences described in her Autobiography. Her early life there was the life of a child of the middle class in a small French town, loved and petted by her father and her sisters, sheltered from the ruder experiences of life, brought up in that atmosphere of sincere piety and otherworldliness which are of the best traditions of the Catholic families of France.

The convent of Carmel which was the home of the Little Flower in religion, still shelters three of her sisters, and it has the distinction of treasuring her sacred relics in a new chapel built especially to enshrine them. This shrine is the object of constant pilgrimages, and among the first questions asked by many pious persons of the traveler newly returned from France are these, "Did you go to Lisieux? Did you pray at the tomb of the Little Flower?"

Lisieux is on the line of the great expresses from Cherbourg to Paris, so it is not difficult to pay a visit to the little town by stopping off between trains, either on arriving in Europe or on departing. Thus

it happened that, finding himself near Lisieux during a recent trip, the present writer determined to pay a visit to the places where the Little Flower of Jesus lived and died.

On arriving at the station at Lisieux, one's first inquiry is for the convent of the Carmelites, where St. Theresa lived her religious life. It is only a few moments' walk from the station, and anyone in the town can point it out to you. Arrived there, you see a plain, small building, built almost on a line with the sidewalk. Beside it a large chapel was then in course of erection. The building of this new chapel seriously interfered with the plans of those priests who came to Lisieux with the expectation of saying Mass in the chapel where St. Theresa used to pray. In point of fact, only one Mass a day was then said in the convent, and this by the chaplain who entered into the cloister to say Mass for the Community. Now, in the new chapel, which contains the shrine of the Saint, greater facilities are given.

Among the most interesting things to be seen in the little parlor of the convent are a quantity of military decorations of various nations, sent here out of gratitude for the intercession of St. Theresa. They are arranged in frames covered with glass and hung on the wall, and a rapid calculation assured us that there were nearly seven hundred of these medals and decorations in the collection. Some frames of smaller size contain single decorations sent in this form by clients of the Little Flower.

Having come prepared to say Mass at Lisieux, we hastened to the church of St. Jacques, the parish church of the family of St. Theresa, and offered up the Holy Sacrifice where she had come in her childhood days to pray. But we were told that the church of St. Pierre, the cathedral of Lisieux when this was an episcopal see, was the church most frequented by the Martins (Martin was the family name of St. Theresa). The church of St. Jacques, like the cathedral, is an ancient edifice in the Gothic style, with a fine nave and in good state of preservation.

Mass over, our first objective was the home of the Martins. To get there, one has a pleasant walk along the boulevard until one comes to a narrow lane, winding upward along a gentle slope. A sign at the entrance of the lane bears the inscription: "Les Buissonnets." Without this friendly indication one would have a hard time deciding where to turn, because the little lane does not look as though it led anywhere in particular. But it winds about and in and out like Tennyson's brook, until it brings you suddenly to the gate of the garden. You may enter in, for the place is kept open for visitors, and the caretaker will be glad to show you the places where the Little Flower spent her childhood.

It is a peaceful spot, secluded in its lane and surrounded by a large and pretty garden, and one realizes what a happy and tranquil childhood the Little Flower must have had here. Though the house is not especially large, it has that comfortable

and comely appearance that seems to speak of home and of family joys. It is well kept, and the garden is in the best of order. Without much effort of the imagination one may see the little Theresa, full of childish animation and the idol of everyone about, running along those trim paths or tending her little garden. Indeed it is only some four decades of years since she might have been seen here, a little girl, playing with her sisters.

We pause for a moment to look at the exterior of the building. There is something very impressive in finding so modern and recent-looking a structure an object of reverent pilgrimage. When one visits the dwellings of holy men and women now held in veneration in the Church, one usually finds them ancient and time-worn habitations, for it is usually many years since their holy occupants went to heaven. But here is a comfortable modern building, the perfect type of a well-to-do middle class home, its surroundings such that one would expect to find it the ordinary dwelling of a modern family—yet set apart for veneration and visited by throngs of pilgrims because here the Little Flower of Jesus passed her happy childhood and her dawning youth. Marvelous indeed are the works of God, who, to use her own beautiful figure, can make the rays of His predilection shine on one little flower in the field of His Church so that it shines forth in glory and delights the eyes of all the world.

We enter in and are shown some of the rooms of the dwelling, made interesting and sacred by the

presence of the Little Flower. The entrance is into the room which was formerly the kitchen, where, as the caretaker tells you, she used to hang up her stocking at Christmas time. It is now, so to say, the office of the house, and you may procure there post-cards, pictures and objects of devotion having some relation to St. Theresa.

Adjoining the kitchen is the dining room of the family, furnished as it was in her time, with that round table which she speaks of in her Autobiography, where on the eve of her departure for the convent she sat for the last time at the family repast. It is a very neat and cosy room, and is sedulously kept in the same state as in the time of the Little Flower. Usually the pious visitor is shown the room through a glass door because some too-daring relic-hunters had begun to cut off bits of the upholstery. But on this day, since we were alone and were judged worthy of confidence, we were allowed to enter in and even to take some pictures of the room.

Going upstairs, one is shown into the room of St. Theresa. The altar, with the statue of the Blessed Virgin (a replica of the one that used to stand there, and that several times, so we are told, became animated and smiled upon Theresa and her mother), is still in its place. One is shown the alcove in which her bed used to stand during the time of her grievous illness, from which she was suddenly cured by the Blessed Mother, who smiled at her as Theresa looked toward the statue and prayed.

On the wall hangs also the picture of St. Joseph,

before which each night she used to say her prayers. Adjoining this room, and visible through a glass door, is the room formerly occupied by the father of the Saint. It is furnished in a style that one would expect in a comfortably-off household. Like the other rooms it is of course kept as much as possible in the state in which it was in the time of the childhood of St. Theresa.

Mounting another flight of stairs, one comes to the "belvidere," as it is called, a light and pleasant room with great windows along one side, which was the playroom of the Little Flower's childhood days. From the windows one has a view of a bit of Lisieux, with its pleasant trees and comely dwellings, a typical Norman town. But the most interesting of the objects to be seen in this room is the collection of toys used by the Saint in her childhood days.

There they are, dozens of them carefully sheltered behind glass, but clearly visible—and the sight of them would make almost any child's eyes dance for joy. There are dolls and cradles, pictures, books, sets of tiny articles such as a whole series of little replicas of the things used in saying Mass, to fit up a tiny altar. There are puzzles, checkers, and other games, furnishings for the dolls afore-mentioned, the little housekeeping sets which so delight little girls; in a word, it is clear from a glance at this collection that the parents of Theresa and her older sisters denied her nothing that they thought would make her happy. "She was well pet-

ted by her family!" said the caretaker; "you may judge that by looking at these toys!" Indeed it is easy to behold in fancy the charming little girl, surrounded by the affection of her family, busy with these pretty things. And we shrewdly guess as well that of them all the favorites were these tiny replicas of the sacred objects used by the priest in the Mass. How often she must have decked with them her little altar and rehearsed the duties which she was afterward to perform as sacristan in the chapel of the convent!

We took occasion from the caretaker's remark to ask her whether she personally knew the Little Flower. Her remark is illuminating, to be sure. "I saw her about, like everyone else around here, but in those days no one paid any attention to the little Theresa any more than to anyone else." It is only since her death, when her great career of "passing her heaven in doing good upon earth" has so grandly begun, that the Little Flower has become famous even in her own home. It needed the sunlight of God's visible favor to make the Little Flower shine in the eyes of men.

The caretaker will also tell you how many wonders she hears of from the visitors to this hallowed home. Many of those who come here travel from distant lands to give thanks for favors received through the intercession of St. Theresa.

This is all that is open to the public of the rooms in the Martin home. One may then go out into the pretty garden and stroll about the paths where she

and her sisters ran and played. There are two spots in particular which claim the attention of the devout visitor—one is the place where she had her own little garden and where she used to dress her little altar in the alcove of the wall, and the other, marked by the statue of an angel, the place where she asked her father's leave to enter the Carmel of Lisieux.

But our time is somewhat limited, and we hasten away to visit the other places of special devotion in the city of the Little Flower—the cathedral and the tomb of St. Theresa which is in the lot of the Carmelites in the cemetery of Lisieux. The cathedral is no longer used as the church of a bishop, since Lisieux has no longer a bishop to itself. But the fine old building still serves as a church, and it is worth a visit for its own sake. It is in the Gothic style, as we have said, and imposing in its proportions. There are some curious old bas-reliefs on its walls, and if one had time it would merit a thorough study. As we pass the chapel of the Blessed Virgin and kneel a moment where the Little Flower used so often to come to pray, we remember a curious circumstance. It is somewhere in this chapel, in an unmarked and unhonored grave, that lies the unhappy Bishop Cauchon, who hounded to death St. Joan of Arc. He became afterward bishop of Lisieux, if we remember rightly, and died, say the chronicles: "In the hands of his barber." Did the Little Flower know that Cauchon was buried in Our Lady's chapel? And did her thoughts sometimes go out in pity to this unhappy man who so misused his powers?

We leave the cathedral with regret, for it was here that the Martin family came most often, though St. Jacques was, as we have said, their parish church. It was here that Theresa used to come for Mass and communion, and the old church has gained a new interest and charm from the memory of that childish form.

The cemetery lies in the same general direction as the cathedral, but is some twenty-minutes' walk farther on and outside the town. It is a pleasant stroll, up a slight rise, and the road we took is bordered by fine trees. The most direct way, however, lies up a less interesting road, which begins not far from the railroad station. Up this way came solitary figures or groups, which plodded toward the tomb of the Little Flower. We were told that at all seasons of the year, though especially of course in the summer time, the people thronged from far and near to pray at her grave, and that one might almost always find someone kneeling there. Now her holy remains are enshrined in the new chapel of the Carmel of Lisieux.

To get to the cemetery we took the somewhat longer way, and as we entered the gate there were pilgrims from the other direction just going in. Following them, one passed through the walks of the cemetery, up an old stone staircase, and into a higher space in which is to be found the lot of the Sisters of the Carmel of Lisieux. Each grave in this little enclosure is marked by a simple wooden cross which bears the name of the nun who rests beneath. The

grave of the Little Flower had this simple sign like the rest, but it was covered, as was the grave beneath, with wreaths and bouquets of flowers. At either side was a kneeling bench, which served the needs of the pilgrims—for it rains often in Normandy. An inscription begged of the pious faithful not to light or burn candles at the tomb, as such a sign of honor would be a rash anticipation of the judgment of the Church which was then in process of consideration, concerning the beatification of the Little Flower. Our visit was made in 1922.

While we were at the grave, the pilgrims came and went by ones and twos and threes. They knelt by the side of the grave, prayed with much devotion there, and then took their way again toward Lisieux. There were no signs in the cemetery to guide one to the grave, but this office was performed by the groups of pilgrims themselves, forever going backward and forward, to and from the tomb of the Little Flower.

As we walked down the hill again, toward the Convent of the Carmelites and the station, we met still other pilgrims to the tomb. Here it was a poor old woman toiling along up the hill, there a young girl dressed in the height of the fashion, walking with dreamy eyes toward the gate of the cemetery. Here again a man and a woman were going in the same direction, having alighted in great haste from the carriage which had brought them, apparently, from the railroad station. They were intent on making a visit to the Little Flower between trains, as they speeded to some distant destination.

Arrived at the foot of the hill, we entered for a moment the new chapel which was in course of building just beside the convent of the Little Flower. An obliging workman within pointed out the place where a vault was being prepared to hold the remains of St. Theresa as soon as the Church should pronounce the decree of her beatification. Thus a more glorious resting-place was being provided for her, whose mortal remains are now enshrined there, the object of so much reverence and such constant pilgrimages. Now, so short a time afterward, she has been first beatified, then canonized, and the church has thus put the final seal of her approval on the reverence and love paid by so many millions of Catholics to this favored child of Jesus and of Mary.

CHAPTER III

THE FAMILY LIFE OF THE LITTLE FLOWER

FAMILY life is an institution of God Himself and it springs from Christian marriage, which Christ has raised to the dignity of a sacrament. For this reason, and because the truly Catholic family is the nursery of all holiness, the best of all environments for growing youth, the Church has always blessed and encouraged the sanctification of the home. Just as true patriotism, which is the unselfish love of country, has always been fostered by Catholic influence, so also love of family and love of home have been praised and commended by the Church throughout her history.

It is true that for the sake of the greater perfection of the religious life and for the merit of renunciation, the Church encourages her children to leave family and friends and home and to consecrate themselves to the service of God in religion; but in so doing, she only sanctions the leaving of the lesser good for the sake of a greater one. It is not that she loves the Christian home less, but that she loves the beauty and perfection of the religious life more.

The rules of Religious Institutes do indeed exhort and encourage their members to mortify any

selfish love of parents, relatives and friends, but none the less these same rules encourage an unselfish and supernatural love of home and family. The selfish element in the love of parents, sisters, and brothers, is mortified and restrained by the religious vocation; but the unselfish devotion which Religious have for their families is rather augmented and intensified by the religious life. Those who enter there continue to love their relatives with a pure and unselfish affection, pray for them with daily fervor, and never cease to take an interest in their welfare so far as the duties and obligations of their religious life allow.

It would seem that the story of the Little Flower, the record which she has left of her own devoted love of her family, is meant by almighty God to put clearly before the world the true devotion and affection which Religious feel and cherish for their relatives. Besides, the whole history of the Little Flower up to the time when she entered Carmel is a charming and idyllic description of Catholic family life.

Both her parents had thought of entering religion, and both had made efforts to that end. But the mysterious providence of God had other designs upon this holy couple and directed their feet into the paths of Catholic matrimony. They were to be the parents of five Religious, four of whom were to be Carmelites and one a nun of the Visitation. These parents, so blessed in their offspring, carried into their home the fervent piety and self-sacrificing devotion

which had prompted them early in youth to seek to immolate themselves by the consecration of the religious life.

This is no new experience in the history of Catholic families. How often it has occurred that Catholic men and women who have had aspirations to the priesthood or the religious life and who have found these aspirations impossible of realization, not through their own fault but through the workings of Providence, have become the parents of priests or Religious. The same lively faith and devotion which prompted them to wish to consecrate themselves to God, are communicated to their children and encourage them in turn to desire and seek the blessings of the religious or the priestly life.

Again, the Catholic home, in its ideal perfection, requires of parents many of the same virtues and much of the same self-immolation as the religious life demands. The perfection of parenthood requires the exercise of the religious virtues. The poverty, chastity and obedience exercised by Catholic parents are not the same as those of Religious, but they are in some way comparable, in their highest excellence, to religious perfection.

They must also be detached from earthly goods, where there is question of the truest interests of their family. They also must live a life of self-denial and purity; they, too, must exercise obedience to one another, and to the duties of their married state. The ideal Catholic father or mother cannot become so without approximating in many ways the renunci-

ations and labors, the unselfishness and self-sacrifice of the priest or the Religious.

The introduction to the life of the Little Flower gives us a picture of both her parents in their youth. In the month of September, 1843, it tells us, the young man who was to be the father of the Little Flower, whose name was Louis Joseph Stanislaus Martin, climbed to the lofty summit of the great St. Bernard to ask admission to the monastery there. He himself was the child of a devout Catholic father, a captain in the garrison of Bordeaux, where Louis had been born on August 22, 1823.

His father, who was a Chevalier of the Legion of Honor (the royal and military order of St. Louis), is described as a very type of faith, of bravery and of honor. When Louis, who was the youngest child of the family, was baptized, the holy Bishop of Bordeaux declared of him, "God has predestined this little one for Himself."

Now the young man had made the long journey from Alençon, in lower Normandy, where his family had gone to live on leaving Bordeaux, to ask admission as a novice into the monastery of St. Bernard.

The good prior, on receiving his application, questioned Louis: "My good young man," he asked, "have you finished your studies in Latin?" Louis was obliged to reply that he had not. "I regret that very much," said the prior, "because it is an essential condition for being admitted among our brethren. But do not be discouraged, return to your own place,

work hard, and afterward we will receive you with open arms."

A bit disillusioned, the young traveler returned home, and after a while he realized that Providence "had other designs for him equally merciful, equally ineffable."

A few years later, in that same town of Alençon from which Louis Martin had come, "a pious young girl," with a face pleasantly stamped with rare energy of character, Mademoiselle Zélie Guérin, presented herself in the company of her mother at the Hotel Dieu of the Sisters of St. Vincent de Paul. Her sister had become a Religious and she herself had wished for a long time to ask admission into this house of charity, but in the first interview, the mother superior, guided by the Holy Spirit, assured her without hesitation that this was not the will of God.

The pious young girl returned to her father's house, and often thereafter she used to offer up this touching prayer: "My God, since I am not worthy to be Your spouse, as my dear sister is, I will enter the state of marriage so as to fulfill Your holy will. Then I beg of You, give me many children and grant that they may all be consecrated to You." Thus it happened, goes on the Introduction to the Autobiography, "that by a series of events which were truly providential, these two pious young people were united in marriage in the church of Our Lady at Alençon on the twelfth of June, 1858.

"The very evening of this happy day—a confiden-

tial letter has revealed it to us—Louis confided to his young companion his desire always to regard her as a beloved sister. But after long months, partaking in the dream of his spouse, he wished like herself to behold their union blessed with numerous children so as to offer them to the Lord.

"From this chosen soil," the account goes on, "sprang nine white flowers, of which four at an early age were transplanted to the gardens of the skies, while five others blossomed later on, four in the Order of Carmel and one in that of the Visitation." In this manner the desire of their pious mother was realized.

It is interesting to record that the good parents, after the birth of their four eldest daughters, prayed fervently to God through the intercession of St. Joseph to send them a little missionary. Soon after a boy was born, whom they named Marie Joseph Louis. After five months he died, and the parents redoubled their novena for a little missionary. "A new little Joseph arrived, full of hope," and he was named Marie Joseph Jean Baptiste. Nine months had hardly passed by, when he fled from this world.

That was the end of prayers for missionaries, but, as the introduction to the Autobiography says, "if these pious parents could have lifted the veil of the future, even for an instant, what transports of thankfulness and joy would have been theirs, for contrary to appearances, the desire of these Christians, worthy of the ages of Faith, was entirely fulfilled. It was in their last child, that blessed soul,

queen among her sisters, chosen and privileged above the rest." As one writer has said of her, "Theresa is now a remarkable missionary. Her word is powerful and irresistible, her life has a charm which will never fade; and every soul whom she captivates will be safe from the waters both of tepidity and of sin."

The life of this pious couple is further described for us. Each morning saw them at the foot of the altar. They knelt together at the Holy Banquet, they observed rigorously the abstinences and fasts of the Church, they abstained with absolute fidelity from servile work on Sundays and holy-days, their chosen recreation was the reading of spiritual books. They had family prayers in common, after the example of M. Martin's father, the venerable Captain who used, it is said, to recite the Our Father with such devotion as to make all his hearers weep.

Through their industry M. and Mme. Martin became well-to-do, but they never allowed luxury to creep into their household nor departed from their patriarchal simplicity of manners. "What an illusion possesses the greater part of mankind," Mrs. Martin used often to say. "If they have riches, they seek honors, and if they get these, they are still unhappy, because the heart which seeks anything else but God, is never satisfied." All her maternal ambitions had to do with heaven. "Four of my children are already well provided for," she wrote, "and the others will go also to the heavenly kingdom, loaded with more merits because they will have had a longer combat."

One result of all this devotion and purity of life, was a great spirit of charity. Every year this pious couple took out of their income a large sum for an offering to the Propagation of the Faith. "They consoled the poor in their distress and served them with their own hands." M. Martin was once seen, after the example of the Good Samaritan, lifting up a workman who had tumbled over intoxicated in a frequented street, taking up his box of tools, offering him the help of his arm and gently chiding him as he led the poor man home.

Blasphemers were silenced in his presence. He never allowed human respect to master him. No matter what company he was in, he always saluted the Blessed Sacrament when passing a church, and with the same respect he greeted each priest whom he met on the way. M. Martin was a jeweler by trade, and in the year 1871 he had acquired such a competence as to be able to retire from business. Madame Martin, however, had established a manufactory of the famous lace called "Point d'Alençon" and this was kept up. Perhaps this was to give continued employment to the lace-makers. It would have been a motive worthy of these pious folk.

Well, then, did Father De Santanna, S.J., in his dedication of the Portuguese translation of the Autobiography of the Little Flower, inscribe it "To the holy and eternal memory of Louis Joseph Stanislaus Martin, and of Zélie Guérin, blessed parents of Sister Theresa of the Infant Jesus, the examples for all Christian parents."

It was into such a family that the Little Flower was born on the 2nd of January, 1873. Her sisters, Marie and Pauline, were home from school for the Christmas holidays. They were then pupils at the Visitation Convent at Le Mans. It was nearly midnight when they heard their father coming upstairs with a light and rapid step, and calling into their room with joyful tones, "Children, you have another little sister!" The two girls were rather hoping that it might be a little missionary, but any disappointment they felt was soon gotten over. Two days later the infant was baptized in the church of Notre Dame, where her parents had been married. Her eldest sister was her godmother, and the warmth of human affection and the brightness of heavenly love illuminated that blessed and happy family, of which she was the ninth and last child.

These details are enough to enable us to form an idea of the charming family life of the Little Flower. But in her Autobiography she herself with bright gratitude and tender feeling gives us many other delightful and touching details. Speaking of herself as a little flower and praising the mercies of God, she says: "It is He who made this little flower spring up in an earth that was holy and all fragrant with a virginal perfume; it is He who made her follow eight lilies shining with whiteness. In His love He wished to keep her from the poisonous breath of the world. Scarcely did her petals begin to unfold, when this good Master transplanted her on the

mountain of Carmel in the chosen garden of the Virgin Mary."

An extraordinary precociousness of intelligence made the Little Flower sensible to these holy influences at a very early period of her existence. Of the three periods which she distinguishes in her life, she declares, "the first, despite its short duration, is none the less fertile in memories. It extends from the time when my reason awakened, to the time when my dear mother departed for heaven; in other words, until I was four years and eight months old. God in His kindness granted me the grace of awaking my intelligence very early and of imprinting so profoundly in my memory the recollections of my childhood that these past happenings seem to me of yesterday. Without doubt, Jesus wished me to know and to appreciate the incomparable mother He gave me. Alas, His divine hand took her from me very soon to crown her in heaven.

"All my life the Lord has been pleased to surround me with love; my first recollections are of smiles and of tender caresses. And if He had placed me in the midst of so much love, He had also put in my little heart a most affectionate and sensitive nature. One cannot imagine how much I loved my father and mother; I showed them my tenderness in a thousand ways, for I was very demonstrative. Sometimes the means that I then employed to show my affection, make me smile now when I think of them."

Then St. Theresa copies from a letter of her mother

a description of her childhood ways. " 'The baby is such a little rogue. She comes to pet me and at the same time to wish that I was dead. "Oh, how I wish that you would die, my dear little mother." We scold her, but she defends herself with such an astonished air and says, "I want you to die so that you'll go to heaven, because you say that we have to die to go there." In the same way she wishes her father to die when she is in one of her outbursts of affectionateness. The dear little creature does not want to leave me; she is continually near me and follows me delightedly, especially to the garden. When I am not there, she refuses to stay there too and cries so much that they are obliged to go and look for me.

" 'In the same way, she will not climb the staircase alone, or at least she calls out to me at each step, "Mama! Mama!"

" 'There are as many "Mama's" as there are steps, and if unfortunately I forget to answer her even once, "Yes, my little daughter"; she stays right in the spot and will not go backward nor forward.'

"When I was about three years old," continues the Little Flower, "my mother wrote, 'Little Theresa asked me the other day if she would go to heaven; "Yes, if you are very good," I answered her. "Ah! Mama," she replied, "if I were naughty should I go to hell? But then I know what I would do: I would fly away to you, who would be in heaven, and you would hold me tight in your arms. How could

the good God take me away then?" I saw by her looks that she was quite persuaded that God could not do anything to her if she hid herself in her mother's arms.

" 'Marie loves her little sister very much,' goes on the letter; 'she is a child who gives us all much joy; her frankness is extraordinary and it is charming to see her running after me to make her confession. "Mama, I pushed Céline once, and I struck her once, but I will not do it any more." As soon as she has done anything in the least wrong, everyone must know about it. Yesterday she accidentally tore a little piece of the wall paper. She was in a pitiable state about it. She must tell her father as quickly as possible.

" 'When he came home, four hours after, no one thought about the matter any more, but she ran to Marie and said to her, "Tell Papa, quickly, that I tore the wall paper." Then she waited like a criminal who expects his condemnation. But evidently the idea was in her little head that she should be pardoned much more easily if she accused herself.' "

In the following pages, the Little Flower tells of the affection with which her father cherished her. "Finding here," she says, "the name of our dear father, I am naturally borne away by some very happy recollections. When he came home, I invariably ran in front of him and sat down on one of his shoes, then he carried me about in that fashion as much as I liked through the house and in the garden. Mama said laughingly that he did every-

thing I wished, 'What would you have?' he replied, 'She is my queen!' then he would take me in his arms and lift me high up and seat me on his shoulder, hugging me and caressing me in all sorts of ways.

"Still, I can hardly say that he spoiled me, I remember one day when I was in the swing, he passed by and called out to me, 'Come and kiss me, my little queen.' Contrary to my usual way of acting, I would not budge, and I answered with a spoilt manner, 'Come yourself, Papa.' He did not heed me, as indeed was right. Marie was there and cried out, 'You spoilt little thing,' said she, 'how bad you are to answer your father that way.'

"In a moment I had jumped out of the swing. The lesson had gone home only too well, the whole house rang with my cries of contrition. I climbed up the staircase as quickly as I could go, and this time I did not call out 'Mama!' at each step. I thought only of finding Papa, and of making up with him, which of course was quickly done.

"I could not bear the thought of having grieved my dearly loved parents," she goes on; "it was a matter of a moment for me to acknowledge my faults. This little story of my childhood, told so naturally by Mother herself, will show this. 'One morning I wished to kiss the little Theresa before going downstairs; she seemed to be sound asleep and I did not dare awake her. But Marie said to me, "Mama, she's only pretending to be asleep, I am sure of it." Then I bent over her to kiss her, but

she quickly hid herself under the covers, and said to me with the air of a spoilt child, "I don't want anyone to see me."

" 'I did not like this at all, and I let her know it. Two minutes afterward I heard some one crying, and to my great surprise I saw her at my side. She had gotten up all by herself from her little bed, had come downstairs barefoot and encumbered with her night-gown, longer than herself. Her little face was covered with tears. "Mama," said she, throwing herself into my arms, "Mama, I have been naughty, forgive me." Pardon was soon granted. I took my little cherub in my arms, pressed her to my heart, and covered her with kisses.' "

The affection of the Little Flower for her sisters was likewise very great. "I remember also," she says, "the very great affection which I had for my dear godmother (her oldest sister, Marie), who had just finished her studies at the Visitation. Without seeming to do so, I watched everything which was said or done about me and it seems to me that I judged of things as I do now. I listened attentively to everything which she taught Céline. To get the favor of being allowed in the room during her lessons, I was very good and obeyed her in everything; so she gave me many presents which, despite their little value, caused me an extreme delight.

"I was very proud of my two older sisters, but since Pauline seemed to me so far away, I dreamed about her from morning to night. When I was just beginning to talk, and Mama asked me, 'What

are you thinking of?' the unfailing answer was, 'Of Pauline.' Sometimes I heard them say that Pauline would become a Religious and then, without knowing very well what that was, I would say, 'So shall I be a nun, too.' This is one of my earliest recollections, and since that time I have never changed my resolution. So it was her example, which, at the age of two years, drew me toward the Spouse of virgins."

Of her third sister, Marie Léonie, she says, "My dear little Léonie had also a very large place in my heart and she loved me very much. In the evening, when she came back from school, she used to want to take care of me when the rest of the family were out walking. It seems to me that I can still hear the pretty songs she sang with her sweet voice to put me to sleep.

"I remember so well the day of her First Communion. I recall also the poor little girl, her companion, whom our dear mother had dressed according to the touching custom of well-to-do families in Alençon. This child never left Léonie for an instant on that happy day, and in the evening, at the great dinner, she had the place of honor. Alas, I was too little to stay up for this pious feast; but I had a little part in it, thanks to the goodness of Papa, who came himself at the dessert, to bring to his little queen a piece of the iced cake!

"And now it remains for me to speak of Céline," she continues, "the little companion of my childhood. Of her I have so many memories that I do

not know which to choose. We two understood each other perfectly, but I was much livelier and less ingenious than she. Here is a letter which will recall to you, my mother in religion, how sweet Céline was and how naughty I was. I was then about three years old and Céline six years and a half old. 'My little Céline is altogether disposed to be good. As to the little rogue (Theresa), no one can tell how she will turn out, she is so small and heedless. The child is very intelligent, but much less sweet and gentle than her sister and, above all, her stubbornness is almost unconquerable. When she says "No," nothing can make her yield. You might put her in the cellar all day without getting her to say "yes." She would prefer to sleep there than to say it.' "

St. Theresa now gives some examples of what she declares was her childish self-love, and then declares: "With such a nature I know perfectly well that if I had been brought up by parents without goodness, I should have become very wicked and might even have lost my soul. But Jesus watched over His little bride, He made all her faults turn to her advantage, because when they were checked in time, they helped her to increase in perfection. Indeed, since my self-love was great, and my love of what was good equally strong, it was enough to tell me once, 'You must not do that,' and I never wanted to do it any more. I see with pleasure, in the letters of my dear mother, that as I advanced in age, I gave her more and more consolation. As I had under my

eyes nothing but good examples, I naturally wished to follow them."

The touching affection between these sisters is further related in a letter of their mother. "These two children," she says, "are inseparable. And they are quite sufficient for each other's entertainment. The nurse had given Theresa a bantam rooster and hen. At once the baby gave the rooster to her sister. Every day after dinner, the one takes the rooster and the other takes the hen and they go and sit in the corner of the fireplace and amuse themselves with the little creatures for a long time.

"One morning Theresa got out of her little bed and went to sleep with Céline. The nurse went to look for her to dress her. She found her at last, and the little one said, hugging her sister very tight in her arms, 'Let me alone, Louise, don't you see that we are like the two little white bantams? You cannot separate us from each other.' "

"It is quite true," said the Little Flower, "that I could not stay away from Céline. I had rather leave the table before I had finished my dessert, than not follow her as soon as she got up. Twisting myself about in my high baby chair, I would get down as quickly as I could and off we would go to play together. Oh, my mother in religion," she continued, "how happy I was at that age! Not only had I commenced to enjoy life, but goodness had such charms for me. It seems to me that I was then much as I am now, and that I had already a great command over my actions. Thus, I had formed

the habit of never complaining when anyone took away something which was mine; or again, when I was unjustly accused, I preferred to remain silent than to make excuses. There was not great merit in that for me, for I did it naturally.

"Ah, how quickly they passed, those sunny years of my early childhood! How sweet and gentle an impression they have left in my soul! I remember with delight the Sunday walks, when our dear mother always accompanied us. I experienced still the profound and poetic feelings which rose in my heart at the sight of the fields of wheat, sprinkled over with poppies, with corn flowers and daisies. Already I loved the distant prospects, the wide open spaces and the mighty trees; in a word, all of that beautiful nature raised me to an ecstasy and transported my soul to heaven."

All this paints for us surely an idyllic picture of Catholic family life. The faithful memory of the Little Flower treasured from her earliest years these beautiful and precious recollections of faith and piety. But remark that the devoted family affection, the love of father and mother, of sisters and brothers, are no less striking than the Catholic piety of this favored home. Indeed, the two go perfectly together and one springs naturally from the other. The home in which real and genuine piety is a tradition, must be a loving, genial, happy and united home.

On the other hand, homes where real affection, family unity and peace and mutual helpfulness

abound, are the best shrines for family piety. "Little children, love one another; as I have loved you, so do you also love one another. A new commandment I give unto you, that you have love one for another. By this shall all men know that you are My disciples, if you have love one for another." These admonitions of the Lover of souls are addressed indeed to all mankind, but they echo most entreatingly and with most moving efficacy in Religious Communities and in the Catholic home.

THE DOOR OF THE SCHOOL WHERE
ST. THERESA WAS A PUPIL

(Photograph by the Author)

LES BUISSONNETS

(Photograph by the Author)

CHAPTER IV

THE FAMILY AFFECTION OF THE LITTLE FLOWER

WE REMARKED in a previous chapter that Religious, when they leave home and family for the love of God, do not abandon their dear ones, nor lose their true affection for them. Quite the contrary is true in many instances. The family affection which, in the world, was mixed with a certain selfishness, becomes most unselfish and pure under the influence of the religious life, so that it may really be said that Religious sometimes love their family more after they have entered the convent than they did in the world. They certainly pray for them more, and are more attached to their true interests. They can accomplish a great deal more for their family by their prayer and self-sacrifice while in religion, than they could if they had remained in the world. Then, too, Religious often retain a clearer memory of their family and of all the precious little incidents of their youth than others do. For these memories are not overlaid with many other worldly experiences, but remain fresh and vivid in the unspoiled heart and mind of the Religious.

We see all this quite vividly in the "History of

A Soul," the touching Autobiography of the Little Flower. We have already seen how her recollections began with her second year of life, and how vividly she recalled her earliest experiences. But the following pages of her charming story only add instance after instance of her family affection and of her vivid recollection of home and relatives.

When her mother died, the Little Flower was but four and a half years old. Yet, long years afterward she recalled with singular vividness the details of that sad experience. "All the particulars of our mother's illness are still present to my heart," she says. "I remember especially the last weeks which she passed on earth. Céline and I were like poor little exiles. Every morning Madame X came to get us and we spent the day with her. Once we had not had time to say our morning prayers before starting, and Céline said to me in a low voice as we were on the way, 'Ought we to tell that we have not said our prayers?' 'Oh, yes!' I answered. Then, very timidly, Céline told our secret to the lady, who at once replied, 'Very well, my little ones, you shall say them now.' Then she took us to a great room and left us there. Céline looked at me with astonishment. I was no less surprised and I cried out, 'Ah, this is not the way Mama does. She always says our prayers with us.'

"During the day, despite the amusements which they tried to provide for us, the thought of our dear mother kept coming back to us constantly. I remember that on one occasion Céline received a beauti-

ful apricot. She leaned toward me and said, 'We will not eat it, I am going to give it to Mama.' Alas, our dearly beloved mother was already too sick to eat the fruits of this earth. She would never more assuage her hunger but in heaven with the glory of God, and would never more drink but with Jesus of the mysterious wine of which He speaks at the Last Supper, when He promises to share it with us in the Kingdom of His Father.

"The touching ceremony of Extreme Unction," she goes on, "impressed itself on my soul. I can still see the place where they made me kneel down, I can still hear the sobs of our poor father. The day after Mother's death (Madame Martin departed from this world on the 28th of August, 1877 at eleven o'clock in the evening, at the age of 45), my father took me in his arms and said, 'Come and kiss your dear little mother for the last time.' And I, without saying a single word, put my lips to the icy forehead of that dearly loved mother.

"I do not remember that I cried very much. I spoke to no one of the deep feelings which filled my heart; I looked and I listened in silence, but I saw many things which they would like to have hidden from me. At one moment I found myself alone before the coffin, which was set upright in the corridor. I stood for a long time looking at it. Never before had I seen one, and still I knew what it was. I was so little then that I had to lift my head to see its

whole length, and it seemed to me very large and very sorrowful."

The death of her mother brought to the Little Flower a change of character and disposition which was most trying, both for herself and for the members of her family. But she remembers with the greatest affection and gratitude the delicate and considerate love with which she was surrounded in those days. "At the death of our mother, as you know, my Mother in Religion," she says, "my happy disposition completely changed. Formerly so vivacious, so demonstrative, I now became gentle and excessively sensitive. Often a look was enough to make me burst into tears. I could not endure that anyone should notice me, nor could I tolerate the company of strangers. I only recovered my gayety in the bosom of my family.

"There I was constantly surrounded by the greatest tenderness. The heart of our father, which had always been so affectionate, seemed now to be enriched with truly maternal love; and you know, too, how Marie became for me a most tender and devoted mother. Ah, if our dear Lord had not lavished His life-giving sunshine on His Little Flower, she would never have been able to accustom herself to this earth. She was still too weak to bear the rain and the storm. She needed warmth, sweet dew and gentle breezes, and these blessings were never wanting to her, even beneath the snow of trials."

After their mother's death, M. Martin took his

family to Lisieux so that they might have the companionship of their little cousins and the good influence of their uncle, M. Guérin, Mme. Martin's brother. He wished also to entrust them to the guidance of their aunt, Madame Guérin, so that she might help the older girls to care for their younger sisters. How well St. Theresa recalls the details of this change of residence, though she was at that time scarcely five years old.

"I did not feel any sorrow," she says, "when we left Alençon. Children love change and things which are out of the ordinary. So it was with a feeling of pleasure that I went to Lisieux. I remember so well the trip and the arrival in the evening at my uncle's house. I can still see my little cousins Jeanne and Marie waiting for us with my aunt at the door. Oh, how I was touched by the affection which those dear relatives showed us!

"The next day they took us to our new home, Les Buissonnets, in a quiet part of the town quite close to the beautiful promenade called Jardin de l'Etoile. The house seemed to me delightful. The belvidere, from which one could see far, far away, the English garden in front of the house and another large garden behind it, all this was a delightful novelty to my young imagination. Indeed this smiling dwelling-place became the scene of most sweet joys, of unforgettable family scenes. Elsewhere, as I have said before, I was in exile. I wept, I realized that

I had no more a mother! There, my little heart unfolded and I once more smiled at life."

We have given in a previous chapter a description of a visit to this home of the Little Flower at Les Buissonnets, which still retains all the charming homelikeness that it had when she came there as a little child. It is kept with care in the same condition as when she lived. The exterior of the house, as one may see from the pictures, is charmingly homelike. It is built of red brick with light trimmings and nestles comfortably in its green and well-kept gardens. The interior of the house is quite in keeping with its exterior.

The room where little Theresa used to sleep has been transformed into an oratory, and an altar stands in the alcove where her little bed used to rest. The dining room is still preserved just as it was, with the same furniture as when St. Theresa left home to enter the Carmel. The furnishings are elegant and tasteful and everything speaks of peace and family comfort.

But most interesting perhaps of all the objects at Les Buissonnets is the collection of toys, preserved, as we have said, in the upper room where Theresa and her little sisters used to play. They surely offer evidence of the way in which her family gratified her every wish. We have described some of these toys already. There are checker-boards and other games, dolls and cradles, books, pictures, the little housekeeping sets which so delight small girls,

a canary bird-cage, a ship in full sail, little panniers for picnicking, and in the midst a set of wee altar furniture with a monstrance, candlesticks, statues, and other little objects of devotion.

There too, in the turret room, is kept the work-table of the Little Flower, with its crucifix, its ink-stand and books just as she left them. One gains a vivid notion at Les Buissonnets of the comfort and happiness of the home which the Little Flower loved so well. The bright days which she passed there, left an idelible imprint on her memory. Few persons recall so well their life when they were five years old.

"Each morning," she says, "when I awoke, I would find you there to caress me, and at your side I would say my prayers; then it was you who gave me my reading lesson, and I remember that the first word which I could read alone, was 'heaven.' As soon as my lesson was over, I would climb up to the belvidere, where Papa usually stayed. Ah, how happy I was when I could tell him that I had gotten good marks! Every afternoon I would go to take a little walk with him and to visit the Blessed Sacrament, one day in one church, the next in another. It was so that I first entered the chapel of Carmel. 'Do you see, my little queen,' said Papa, 'behind that big grating there are holy nuns who constantly pray to God.' I was far from thinking," she continues, "that in this blessed Carmel I should receive such great graces."

No detail of her days at home has slipped from her memory. "After the walk," she says, "I used to go into the house again and learn my lessons; then, all the rest of the time, I would romp around in the garden near my dear father. I did not care much about playing with dolls, my greatest pleasure was to make little cups of tea with seeds of the bark of trees. When my concoctions had a pretty tint, I would hurry up to offer them to Papa in a dainty little cup which really made one want to taste the contents. Then this tender father would at once quit his work and, smiling, make as though he were going to drink."

The love of beauty, so strong in the heart of the Little Flower, showed itself even in those early days. "I love," she says, "to tend the flowers, and amused myself by decking little altars in a recess which happily I found in the middle of the wall of our garden. When everything was ready I would run to Papa, who would go into an ecstasy before my wonderful altar so as to give me pleasure, admiring what I thought were real masterpieces. I should never come to an end if I wished to tell you the thousand incidents of this sort which I remember. Ah! how could I tell of all the tendernesses which my incomparable father lavished on his little queen?"

The holidays she spent with her father are no less vivid in her recollection. "Those were happy days for me," she says, "when my dear king, as I loved to call him, carried me off fishing with him. Some-

times I tried to fish myself, with my little tackle. More often I preferred to sit on the flowery grass a little distance away. Then my thoughts became very deep, and without knowing what it meant to meditate, my soul would plunge itself into real prayer. I would listen to the distant sounds, to the murmur of the winds. Sometimes there floated to me from the town, some vague notes of military music, and these stirred a gentle melancholy in my heart. The earth seemed to me a place of exile then, and I dreamed of heaven.

"The afternoon passed swiftly away. Very soon it was time to return to Les Buissonnets, but before packing up I would eat the luncheon which I had carried in my little basket. Alas, the pretty slices of bread and jelly which you had prepared for me had changed their appearance. In place of their bright color, I saw only a light tint of red where the jelly had soaked in and grown stale. Then the earth seemed still more sad to me, and I understood that only in heaven will joy be without clouds.

"Speaking of clouds," she goes on, "I remember that one day the beautiful blue sky of the country was obscured and soon a storm arose and it began to thunder terribly and there were bolts of vivid lightning. I turned to the right and to the left so as not to lose anything of the majestic spectacle. At last I saw the lightning strike a neighboring field, and, far from feeling the least fear, I was enchanted; it seemed to me that the good God was very close

to me. My dear father, less pleased than his little queen, came to put an end to my delight. Already the grass and the tall marguerites, higher than my head, were sparkling with precious stones and we had to cross several meadows to get to the grove. So he took me in his arms, despite his burden of fishing tackle, and from that point of vantage I looked down on the beautiful diamonds, almost regretting that I could not be covered and drenched with them."

She remembers also, very clearly, how her father used to allow her to give alms to the poor. "It seems to me that I have not told how, during my daily walks, at Lisieux, as at Alençon, I used often to give alms to the poor. One day we saw a wretched old man who was dragging himself along painfully on crutches. I went up to him to give him my little coin; he fixed upon me a long and sorrowful look, then, shaking his head with a melancholy smile, he refused my alms. I cannot tell what passed through my heart. I should have liked to help him, and in place of that I had perhaps humiliated and hurt him!

"Without doubt he guessed my thoughts, for I soon saw him turn round and smile at me from afar. At that moment Papa had just bought me a cake; I had a great desire to run after the old man and give it to him, for I said to myself, 'He does not need money, but surely a cake would give him pleasure.' Then I know not what fear held me; my heart was so heavy that I could hardly hide my

tears. At last I remembered having heard that on the day of First Communion one could obtain all the favors one asked. This thought consoled me very soon. Though I was only six years old at the time, I said to myself, 'I will pray for my poor old man the day of my First Communion.'

"Five years later I faithfully kept my resolution. I have always thought that my childish prayers for this suffering member of Our Lord have been blessed and recompensed. As I grew up, I loved the good God more and more, and I very often gave Him my heart, using the formula which Mama had taught me; I tried hard to please Jesus in all my actions and I took great care never to offend Him."

She gives many other touching details of her childhood. "The feasts," she says, "ah, what fragrant memories these simple words recall to me! The feasts! I loved them so much. You knew so well how to explain the mysteries hidden in each one of them. Yes, those days on earth became for me days of heaven. I loved especially the procession of the Blessed Sacrament. What a joy to strew flowers in the path of the Blessed Sacrament! But before I let them fall to earth, I tossed them high in air and was never so happy as when I saw one of my rose leaves touch the Sacred Ostensorium.

"Those feasts! And if the great feasts came too seldom, at least each week brought one that was very dear to my heart!—Sunday—what a radiant day! It was the feast of the good God, the day of rest. First, the whole family set off for High Mass;

and I remember that when the time for the sermon came, we had to leave our chapel, which was far away from the pulpit, and take places in the nave, which was not always very easy. But to the little Theresa and her father, everyone hastened to offer seats. My uncle was charmed when he saw us both coming. He called me his 'little ray of sunshine' and he used to say that to see the venerable patriarch, leading his little daughter by the hand, was a picture which always delighted him.

"For my part, I never bothered whether people were looking at me. I was only intent on listening carefully to the priest. A sermon on the Passion of Our Lord was the first which I understood and which touched me deeply. I was then five and a half years old and from then on I was able to understand and appreciate the meaning of all the instructions.

"But let me go back to my Sunday. This joyful day, which passed so swiftly, had also its tinge of melancholy. My happiness was without alloy until Compline, but after that evening office a feeling of sorrow entered into my soul. I thought that on the morrow one must commence again the course of life, must work, must learn lessons, and my heart felt the exile of this earth. I sighed after the repose of heaven, the Sunday which would know no end in our true fatherland.

"Before returning to Les Buissonnets my aunt used to invite us in turn to spend the evening with her. I was very happy when my turn came. I listened with extreme pleasure to all that my uncle

would say. His serious conversation interested me very much, and he little dreamed, I am sure, of the attention which I gave. Sometimes my joy was mingled with fear when he would sit me on his knee and would sing 'Bluebeard' with his terrible, deep voice.

"At about eight o'clock in the evening Papa would come to get me; then I remember how I would look at the stars with inexpressible pleasure. There was in the deep firmament one group of pearls of gold, the belt of Orion, which I noted with special delight because it was in the form of the letter 'T,' ⁂ and I used to say to my dear father on the way, 'Look, Papa, my name is written on the heavens.' Then, not wishing any longer to see this wretched earth, I would ask him to lead me by the hand and, without regarding where I put my feet, I would throw my little head well upward and would never weary of contemplating the star-strewn azure."

The winter evenings at Les Buissonnets especially impressed the memory of this fortunate little one. She gives a charming picture of home life when she describes them. "How much I could tell," she says, "of the winter evenings at Les Buissonnets. After a game of checkers, Marie or Pauline would read 'The Liturgical Year' and then some pages of another book which was at the same time interesting and instructive. During this time I took my seat on Papa's knees, and when the reading was over he used to sing with his fine voice some melodious

refrains as though he wanted to put me to sleep. Then I would rest my head on his heart and he would gently rock me to and fro.

"Finally we went upstairs to say our night prayers and there again my place was near my dear father. I had only to look at him to know how saints can pray. Finally my little adopted mama put me to bed, after which I would invariably say, 'Have I been good to-day? Is God satisfied with me? Will the little angels come and fly about me?' Always the answer was 'Yes,' otherwise I should have passed the whole night crying. These questions over, you used to kiss me and so did my dear godmother, and little Theresa remained alone in the dark."

One of the little family ceremonies which made the deepest impression on St. Theresa was evidently the occasion of the distribution of prizes, when she received the little rewards of faithful studies. "With what joy," she says, "did I welcome each year the arrival of the day for the distribution of prizes. Though I was the only one to compete for them, still, justice was always carefully observed. I never received any rewards unless they had been entirely deserved. My heart used to beat quite violently as I listened to my fate and received from the hands of my king before the entire family the prizes and the crowns which I had deserved. For me it was like a picture of judgment day—!"

Devotion to her father has also left in her memory the most vivid recollections. "I had not even the

courage," she says, "at that time to think without dismay that Papa could die. One day he had mounted to the top of a ladder, and as I was standing there, very near, he said to me, 'Move away, my little queen, for if I fall, I shall crush you.' At once I experienced an inward revulsion and coming still nearer to the ladder I thought to myself, 'At least, if Papa falls, I am not going to have the sorrow of seeing him die, I am going to die with him.'

"No, I could never tell how much I loved him. Everything about him was for me a subject of admiration. When he explained to me his opinions on very serious matters, just as though I had been a big girl, I would say to him, naïvely: 'Surely, Papa, if you spoke in that way to the great men of the government, they would take you and make you king, then France would be happy, happier than it has even been. But you would be unfortunate, because that is the fate of all kings. Then, too, you would no longer be my king, all for myself, so I would rather that they did not know you.' "

When she went to the school of the Benedictine Sisters at Lisieux, her affection for her father was none the less great. "Every evening," she says, "happily, I was allowed to go home and then my soul unfolded itself; I would leap to Papa's knees and tell him the marks that had been given me and his kiss would make me forget all my difficulties. With what joy I announced to him the result of my first composition! I had received the highest marks, and for my recompense I was presented with a pretty

little piece of silver, which I put in my savings-bank for the poor. Nearly every Thursday it received another companion there. Ah, I had a real need of being spoiled a little in this way. It was very useful to the Little Flower often to sink its tender roots in the dear and chosen soil of home because it found nowhere else the sustenance necessary for its nourishment.

"Every Thursday was a holiday, but it was not like the holidays which Pauline used to give me and which I passed for the most part in the belvidere with Papa. I did not know how to play like other children, and I felt that I was not a very agreeable companion for them; still, I did my best to imitate the others, but without ever succeeding."

As she recorded her attentive interest in the lessons which her sister Marie had given Céline, so now she describes her childish attention to the instructions which her sister gave to Céline in preparation for her First Communion. "I was then seven years old," she says, "and I was not yet attending school at the Abbey. How sweet to me is the remembrance of her preparation. Each evening during the last week, you spoke to her, my Mother in religion" (Marie was Superior of the Carmel when these lines were written), "of the great action she was about to perform. I listened, eager to prepare myself also, and when I was told to go away because I was still too little, my heart was full of sorrow. I thought to myself that four years was not too long to spend in preparation for receiving the dear Lord. One eve-

ning I heard someone address these words to my happy little sister. 'On the day of your First Communion, you must begin an altogether new life.' Immediately I took the resolution not to wait until my time should come, but to commence a new life with Céline."

Memory of her youthful friendships and affections is very dear to her. "After Céline," she says, "who was, so to speak, indispensable for me, I sought especially the company of my little cousin Marie, because she let me choose the games I should like to play. We were already very united in heart and will as though our good Lord had already given us a presentiment that one day, in the convent of Carmel, we should embrace the same religious vocation. Very often, at my uncle's house, Marie and Theresa would become two very penitent hermits, who possessed only a poor hut, a small field of wheat, and a garden where they could grow a few vegetables. Their life was spent in continual contemplation; that is to say, one replaced the other at prayer, while the other was occupied in active duties.

"Everything was done with decorous silence and with manners perfectly religious. If we went out walking, our play continued even in the street; the two hermits recited the beads together, using their fingers so as not to exhibit their devotion to the unappreciative public. All the same, one day, the hermit Theresa forgot herself; having received a cake for her lunch, before eating it she made over it a great sign of the cross, and several worldly individ-

uals did not deny themselves the pleasure of smiling at the sight.

"Sometimes our union of wills rather passed the boundaries of discretion. One evening on returning from the Abbey we wished to imitate the modesty of the hermits. I said to Marie, 'Lead me, I am going to shut my eyes.' 'I want to shut mine too,' she said, and each did as she wished. We were walking on the sidewalk, so there was no fear of being run over, but after an agreeable promenade of several minutes, during which the two voluntary blind folk experienced the delights of walking without seeing, they both fell together over some boxes at the door of a shop and tumbled them over. In a moment the shopkeeper came rushing out, very angry, to gather up his merchandise. But the would-be blind folk had speedily picked themselves up again and walked away as fast as they could, with their eyes wide open and their ears also to hear the just reproaches of Jeanne [the nurse] who seemed as much put out as the shopkeeper was."

We have multiplied these vivid descriptions given by St. Theresa of her home life to show with what constant affection she always regarded her home and her family and how vivid and dear to her were always all the details and circumstances of her life as a child. They show also the devotion and self-sacrifice of her father and her sisters. Until the time she entered Carmel, this family affection grew and deepened in her heart; and after she had made the great renunciation and left her family and her home, she

continued to think of them and pray for them with unabated fervor. Let us conclude this chapter with her description of her last evening at home and her entrance into Carmel.

"Monday," she says, "the 9th of April, 1888, was chosen for my entry. It was the day on which they celebrated in the convent the feast of the Annunciation, which had been deferred because it had occurred in Lent. The evening before, we were all gathered about the family table, where I was to sit down with them for the last time. Oh, how heartrending are such farewells! Then, when one would like to see oneself forgotten, everyone says the most tender things as if to make one feel all the more the sacrifice of separation.

"The next morning, after casting one last look on Les Buissonnets, that happy nest of my childhood, I set forth for Carmel. I heard Mass, surrounded, as on the evening before, by my dear family. At the moment of the Communion, when Jesus had entered into their hearts, I heard nothing but sobs. I myself did not shed any tears, but as I walked in front to enter the cloister door, my heart beat so violently that I asked myself if I were not going to die. Ah, what a moment! what an agony!

"One must have gone through it to understand such suffering. I embraced all my beloved ones and cast myself on my knees before my father to receive his blessing. He also fell on his knees and wept as he blessed me. It was a spectacle which must have made the angels rejoice, to see this old

man offering to the Lord his child who was still in the springtime of life. At last the gates of Carmel closed upon me and there I received the embraces of those beloved Sisters who have been to me like mothers and who formed for me a new family whose tenderness and devotion those in the world cannot realize."

The experiences of the Little Flower, thus so touchingly portrayed for us, have been shared in by countless Religious, who have left the world to enter upon the consecration of the religious life. They loved their parents, their family and friends, the home which they left for Christ, with a deep and abiding affection. The remembrance of the days of their childhood, of the kindness and care of those who guided and watched over them, abides with them always. They pray, with unwearying devotion, for all whom God has given them as relatives and friends. It is only the selfish element of their affection which they sacrifice. They give up for the love of Christ even the consolations, the sweet affections, the sheltered peace of home.

It was an anguish for the Little Flower thus to bid farewell to her aged father and her sisters, to her well-beloved aunt and uncle and the cousins whom she loved so dearly. The pain of heart which she has described, the wrench and sorrow of parting, has been experienced and endured by how many Religious, men and women, when they enter the novitiate to consecrate themselves to Christ! Only the judgment day will disclose how dearly and purely

they have loved the family they left behind and what blessings their sacrifice has brought not only upon their own souls, but upon the lives and hearts of those whom they have left in the world.

Nor are the resignation and self-sacrifice of the parents and families of Religious, who offer them willingly to God's service, to be undervalued or forgotten. The spectacle of M. Martin, falling on his knees to bless his little daughter as she entered Carmel, offers us a type of the self-sacrifice of many devoted fathers and mothers who, disregarding their own interest, generously give their children to the service of God. He was sixty-five years of age at the time and he already felt in his constitution the beginnings of that sad illness which was so soon to bring him the most agonizing trials.

He had already had partial attacks of that paralysis which, after afflicting one after another of the members of his body, finally, in after days, struck his whole system so that his mind gave way and, during three years, he had to be entrusted to the care of strangers. Yet, with Christian generosity, he not only resigned himself to his little queen's vocation, he even helped her and encouraged her in every way to follow it. Surely his was a precious merit in the sight of God.

On the other hand his little daughter, in the consecration of the cloister, never forgot for a single day, we may be sure, to offer up most touching petitions for him and for her family in the world. The trials which visited him were among her most griev-

ous crosses, and the tender love of father and daughter continued throughout the lives of each, and is now, we may be sure, made perfect and everlasting in Eternity. It is thus that the religious life, far from annihilating or crushing the natural affections, perfects and ennobles them so as to make of earth a vestibule of heaven.

CHAPTER V

THE PARTINGS OF THE LITTLE FLOWER

IN THE wonderfully touching and frank description which she has given of her interior life, St. Theresa has let us understand something of the tender love which bound her to her sisters, and the pain and sadness she felt when one after the other left her to enter the convent of Carmel. There are some persons who little understand how the fulness of family love can co-exist with the devoted self-sacrifice of the love of Christ. For them, in particular, these descriptions of anguish and desolation ought to make it clear how deep a human affection can co-exist with great holiness.

But everyone can profit by reading these pages of the Autobiography because they teach the lesson of willing renunciation and they make it clear to us how much merit is gained both by those who remain in the world and see their dear ones enter religion, and by those who make, in religion, the sacrifice of the company of those most dear to them. It is in this manner that she describes the entry of Pauline into Carmel. She was the first of the favored sisters to follow a religious vocation.

"Now I must speak," she says, "of the bitter

separation which crushed my heart when Jesus took away from me my little adopted mother, so dearly loved. I had said to her one day, 'I should like to go away with you into a far-off desert.' She replied then that my wish was her own, but that she would wait until I was large enough to set forth. This irrealizable promise the little Theresa took quite seriously, and what was her grief to hear her dear Pauline speaking with Marie about her approaching entrance into Carmel! "I did not know Carmel, but I understood that she was leaving me to go into a convent. I understood that she was not going to wait for me!

"How can I describe the anguish of my heart? In one instant life appeared to me in all its stern reality; full of sufferings and of continual separations, and I shed very bitter tears. I did not know in those days the joy there is in sacrifice; I was weak, so weak that I look upon it as a great grace to have been able to bear without dying, a trial which seemed much above my strength.

"I shall always remember with what tenderness my little mother consoled me. She explained to me the life of the cloister, and all of a sudden one evening when I was thinking all by myself of the picture which she had traced for me, I realized that Carmel was the desert where the dear Lord wished to hide me also. I felt this so strongly that there was no longer the slightest doubt in my mind; and this was not the dream of a child who lets herself

be carried away, but the certainty of a divine call. This impression, which I cannot describe rightly, left me in great peace.

"The next day I imparted my wishes to Pauline. She considered them as the will of God and promised to take me to Carmel to see the Mother Prioress, to whom I might tell my secret."

Yet this dawning vocation of the Little Flower, consoling though it was, did not take away the sting of parting. The Mother Prioress of Carmel told the little Theresa that one did not receive postulants at the age of nine and that she must wait until she was sixteen. So, she had to be satisfied with making her First Communion on the day that Pauline took the habit.

"At last," she says, "the second of October came! It was a day of tears and blessings, when Jesus gathered the first of His flowers, that chosen blossom which was to be a few years later the Mother in religion of her sisters. While our dear father, accompanied by my uncle and Marie, climbed the mountain of Carmel to offer his first sacrifice, my aunt took me to the Mass with Léonie and Céline. We burst into tears and, seeing us enter the church in this way, people looked at us with astonishment; but that did not keep us from weeping. I asked myself how the sun could still shine on the earth!

"Perhaps you will think, my dear Mother in religion, that I exaggerate my grief a little. I know very well that this parting should not have afflicted

me so much; but I have to confess that my soul was still far from being mature and I had to pass through many trials before reaching the shores of peace, before tasting the delicious fruits of entire abandonment to God and of perfect love."

In the afternoon, according to custom, the family was allowed to pay a visit to the newcomer in Carmel. Again Theresa describes her suffering. "The afternoon of this second of October, 1882, I saw my dear Pauline, now become Sister Agnes of Jesus, behind the grille of Carmel. Oh, how I suffered in that parlor! Since I am writing the history of my soul, it seems to me I should tell everything. Well, then, I confess that I considered the first sufferings of this separation as nothing as in comparison to those which followed. I, who had been used to speak heart to heart with my little mother, obtained with great difficulty two or three minutes at the end of the family visits.

"It is easy to understand that I spent those moments in shedding tears and that I went away with a broken heart. I did not understand that it was impossible to give us each a half hour frequently and that the longest moments had to be kept for my father and for Marie. I did not understand this, and I said at the bottom of my heart, 'Pauline is lost to me!' My intelligence developed in such an extraordinary way in the midst of this suffering that I soon fell grievously ill."

It was to Pauline that the Little Flower was giv-

ing this first account of her life, to Pauline who was then the Prioress of the Convent, and she continues to describe the suffering she felt when Pauline took the habit of Carmel. In the meantime a strange malady had seized Theresa. She suffered from terrible headaches and nervousness of an agonizing kind. Thus it was that it seemed doubtful at first whether she could be present at the taking of the habit.

"And so, my Mother in religion," she says, "the day of your clothing was drawing near and people avoided speaking of it in my presence for fear of giving me pain, because they thought that I should not be able to be present. In the depths of my heart I believed firmly that our dear Lord would allow me the consolation of seeing again, on that day, my dear Pauline. Yes, I knew well that this feast would be without cloud. I knew that Jesus would not afflict His Spouse by my absence, she who had already suffered so much because of the sickness of her little one. In fact, I was able to embrace my dear adopted Mother, to sit upon her lap, to hide myself under her veil and receive her sweet caresses. I was able to look at her in rapture, so ravishing in her veil of white!

"Indeed, it was a lovely day in the midst of my somber trials; but that day, or rather that hour, passed too swiftly and soon I had to climb into the carriage which carried me far away from Carmel. On reaching Les Buissonnets, they made me lie down, although I did not feel any fatigue. But the

next day I had a violent relapse and the sickness became so serious that, according to all human probability, there was no expectation of my recovery."

When, on October 15, 1886, four years later, her sister Marie entered Carmel in turn, the Little Flower had developed wonderfully in resignation and self-control. Her own vocation to Carmel had meanwhile become deep and strong and unmistakable and she was able to look forward to rejoining soon her dear sisters in the cloister whither they had preceded her. Nevertheless one can read between the lines of her brief description the bitterness of this second parting. "The year when I was received into the Sodality and became a child of Mary," she says, "the Holy Virgin took from me my dear sister Marie, the single support of my soul. Since Pauline had gone, she was my oracle, and I loved her so much that I could hardly live without her sweet companionship.

"As soon as I had learned of her determination, I resolved never to take any more pleasure here below. I could never tell you how many tears I shed! In fact, I had a habit of crying in those days. I wept not only over great things, but over little ones." A little further on she tells of the childish simplicity and faith with which she sought to console herself for this new dereliction. "When Marie entered the Carmel," she says, "since I could no longer tell her my sufferings, I turned toward the skies and addressed myself to the four little angels who had gone

before me thither, thinking that these innocent souls, having never known what trouble or fear was, ought to have pity on their poor little sister who suffered on earth.

"I used to speak to them with a childish simplicity, calling their attention to the fact that since I was the last of the family I had always been the most cherished and loved by my parents and my sisters, and that if they themselves had remained on earth they would no doubt have given me the same proofs of affection. Because they had gone to heaven seemed to me no reason for them to forget me. On the contrary, now that they found themselves able to draw from the divine treasury, they ought to seek there for me the peace I needed and thus to show me that the souls in heaven still know how to love.

"Their answer was not long in coming. Soon my soul was deluged with delicious waves of peace. So I was loved not only on earth, but also in heaven! From that time my devotion increased for my little brothers and sisters in paradise. I loved to speak with them, to tell them of the sorrows of my exile and of my wish to go soon and rejoin them in our eternal fatherland."

We have already spoken of her own parting with her family and her friends when she herself had entered the Carmel. But this bodily separation only increased the union of their souls and it was thus that St. Theresa, together with her sisters in the cloister, must have suffered intensely at the news which

reached them of their father's increasing sickness. She had in her early years a singular premonition of this great cross. What she says of this experience will give us some notion of the sufferings she must have endured when the trial thus foreshadowed actually came to pass.

She was then about six years of age. "Alas," she says, "seeing my father so radiant with cheerfulness I did not foresee the great trials which awaited him. But one day our dear Lord showed me in an extraordinary vision the living image of that coming sorrow. Papa was away on a journey and could not have gotten home that early. It was about two or three o'clock in the afternoon; the sun shone brightly and all nature seemed making holiday. I found myself alone at a window which looked out on the large kitchen garden behind the house. My mind was full of happy thoughts, when I saw before the laundry just opposite to me a man clad exactly like Papa, with the same tall stature, and the same way of walking, but very much bent over and aged. I say *aged* to describe the general appearance of his person, for I did not see his face because his head was covered with a thick veil. He came forward slowly, with measured steps along my little garden. In an instant a feeling of supernatural fear seized me and I cried out very loud in a trembling voice, 'Papa!'

"But the mysterious person seemed not to hear me. He continued his walk without even turning around,

and went toward a group of fir trees which stood by the principal path of the garden. I waited to see him reappear on the other side of these great trees, but the *prophetic vision* had disappeared! All this lasted only a moment, a moment which engraved itself so profoundly in my memory that even to-day, after so many years, the remembrance is as vivid to me as was the vision itself."

After relating how her sisters Marie and Pauline, similarly startled by her exclamation, endeavored to explain the appearance by saying that it was the maid, Victoire, and that they found, on asking her, that she had not left her kitchen, the Little Flower continues, "Besides, the truth was too clear to my mind: *I had seen a man and this man absolutely resembled Papa.* We went together behind the clump of trees and when we found no one there, you told me to think no longer of the occurrence. 'Think no longer of it!' Ah, that was not in my power! Quite often my imagination represented to me that mysterious vision. Quite often I sought to lift the veil which concealed its meaning from me, and I kept in the depths of my heart the interior conviction that it would one day be entirely revealed."

It was in the trying illness of her father, that the fulfilment of this premonition was made only too clear to her. At the age of 66, as we have said, shortly after the entrance of the Little Flower into Carmel, her pious father, after having suffered several partial attacks of paralysis, was stricken with

general paralysis and suffered the great affliction of having his mind give way altogether. Referring to this sad fulfilment, the Little Flower continues:

"And you know all, my dear Mother in religion! You know now that it was our dear father whom Our Lord caused me to see coming forward, bent by age and bearing on his venerable visage and on his white head the symbol of his terrible trial. As the Adorable Face of Jesus was veiled during His Passion, so the face of His faithful servant was to be veiled in the days of his humiliation, so as to shine with greater brilliancy in heaven. Ah, how I admire the ways of God in showing us in advance this precious cross, as a father lets his children see the glorious future which he prepares for them, and pleases himself in his love by considering himself contemplating the riches without price which are to be their inheritance.

"But," she continues, "a reflection comes into my mind. Why did our dear Lord give this light to a child, who, if she had understood it, would have perished with grief? Why? Behold one of those impenetrable mysteries which we shall only understand in heaven and which will furnish us there with a subject of everlasting wonder. My God, how good You are! How You proportion our trials to our strength!"

Several times in the course of her narrative she speaks of this recurring trial. "At the end of May," she says, "in 1888, after the charming profession of

Marie our oldest sister, whom Theresa, the Benjamin, merited the favor of crowning with roses on the day of her mystical wedding, sorrow came again to visit our family. Since his first attack of paralysis we noticed that our good father very easily became tired. During the pilgrimage to Rome I had often noticed that his face showed exhaustion and suffering. But what struck me especially was the admirable progress which he made in the path of sanctity. He had come to possess a mastery over his natural vivacity, and the things of earth seemed hardly to trouble him."

In a following paragraph she continues, "His faith and his generosity were both equal to any trial. See in what words he announced my departure to one of his friends. 'Theresa, my little queen, yesterday entered the Carmel. God alone can ask such a sacrifice, but He supports me so powerfully that, in the midst of my tears, my heart overflows with joy.' To this faithful servant was due a reward worthy of his virtues, and this recompense he himself asked of God. O my Mother in religion, you remember that day in the parlor when he said to us, 'My children, I have just returned from Alençon and there in the church of Our Lady I received such great graces and consolations that I uttered this prayer: "My God, it is too much! Yes, I am too happy! It is not possible to go to heaven like this, I wish to suffer something for You!" and I offered myself as a' * * * * the word 'victim' died

on his lips. He did not dare pronounce it before us, but we understood. In a word, you remember, my Mother in religion, all our bitter griefs. These heart-rending recollections! I need not recall them in detail—." These latter words in particular give us some insight into the mutual sufferings of these sisters, who, having left their father for the love of Christ, still felt so keenly all his trials.

At last the day of the clothing of the Little Flower in the habit of Carmel arrived. It was to be January 10th and as she says, contrary to all expectations, her father had recovered from another attack of paralysis. "Papa was waiting for me at the door of the cloister," she relates; "he came forwârd toward me, his eyes full of tears, and pressed me to his heart. 'Ah,' he cried out, 'here is my little queen!' Then offering me his arm, we made our solemn entry into the chapel. It was the day of his triumph, his last feast on earth!

"All his offerings were complete. His family belonged to God. Céline had already confided to him that later on she also would leave the world for Carmel, and this incomparable father had replied in a transport of delight, 'Come let us go together to visit the Blessed Sacrament and to thank the Lord for the graces which He gives our family, and for the honor which He does me in choosing His spouses from my house. Yes, the dear Lord does me a great honor, indeed, in asking of me my children. If I possessed anything better, I would hasten to offer it to Him.' This 'better' was himself," the Little

Flower continues, then she quotes from the Book of Wisdom, "As gold in a furnace He hath proved them, and as a victim of a holocaust He hath received them, * * * * because God hath tried them, and found them worthy of Himself." (WISDOM, iii. 5. 6).

"I have just said," she continued, "that January 10th witnessed a triumph of our dear father. I compare this feast to the entry of Jesus into Jerusalem on Palm Sunday. Like that of His divine Master, his glory of that day was followed by a dolorous passion; and just as the sufferings of Jesus pierced the heart of His blessed Mother, so our hearts felt very profoundly the sufferings and the humiliations of him whom we cherished most on earth.

"I remember," she goes on, "that in the month of June, 1888—at the time when we feared for him a cerebral paralysis—I surprised our Mistress of Novices by saying to her, 'I suffer a great deal, my mother, but I know that I could suffer a great deal more.' I did not think then of the trial that was coming upon us. I did not know that on the 12th of February, one month after I had taken the habit, our venerated father would drink so bitter a chalice! Ah, then I did not say that I could not suffer any more. Words could not express our anguish. I shall not try to write of it.

"In the future, in heaven," she continued, "we shall delight to dwell on these dark days of exile. Yes, the three years of martyrdom of our father seemed to me the most lovable, the most fruitful of

our life. I would not change them for the most sublime ecstasies, and my heart, in presence of this inestimable treasure, cries out in its gratitude: 'We have rejoiced for the days in which Thou hast humbled us, for the years in which we have seen evils.' (PSALM lxxxix. v. 15.)

"Oh, my dearly beloved Mother, how precious and sweet was our bitter cross, because from all our hearts there went forth only sighs of love and gratitude. We no longer walked; we ran, we flew along the ways of perfection."

M. Martin left Lisieux on that 12th of February to enter a hospital. He stayed there three years and by this time, as he was completely paralyzed, Céline brought him back to Lisieux, where he lived three years more. He died on the 29th of July, 1894, and at the very last he fixed on his daughter who stood near his bed a penetrating look, full of tender gratitude, and which showed that his clouded intelligence had become clear at the final moment.

The Little Flower thus describes her father's death. "The 29th of July, of this last year, the Lord recalled to Himself our good father so tried and so holy. During the two years which preceded his death, my uncle had kept him near to himself, surrounding his sorrowful age with every sort of care. But because of his infirm condition and weakness we saw him only once in the parlor during all the course of his illness. Ah! what an interview! You remember, my Mother, at the moment of parting from us, when we said we should see him again,

he lifted his eyes and with his finger pointing up to heaven he remained for a long time, able only to express his thoughts with this single word, uttered in a voice full of tears: 'In heaven.' "

In her letters to her sister Céline, we find touching allusions to this trial. Thus, in January, 1889, she writes to Céline: "My dear little Céline, Jesus offers you the cross, and the cross is very heavy. And you are afraid that you will not be able to carry this cross without weakening. Why? Our dearly Beloved on the road to Calvary Himself fell three times. Why should we not imitate our Spouse? What a privilege it is from Jesus! How He loves us to send us so great a sorrow! Ah! eternity itself will not be long enough to bless Him for this. He heaps His favors upon us as He heaped them on the greatest saint. What, then, are His loving designs on our souls? It is a secret which will be revealed to us only in our fatherland on the day 'when the Lord shall wipe away all tears from our eyes.' "

In the next letter, written in February, 1889, she again alluded to this sorrow. "Céline," she says, "far from complaining to Our Lord of this cross which He sends us, I cannot comprehend the Infinite Love which has moved Him to treat us thus. Our father must be indeed dearly loved by God to have so much to suffer! What a delight it is for us to be humiliated with him! Humiliation is the only path which makes saints. I know it. I know also that our trial is a mine of gold for us to work. I, little grain of sand, I wish to set myself to work,

without courage, without strength; and this impotence of mine will make the task easier for me. I wish to work from love. It is our martyrdom which commences. Let us enter into the lists together, my dear sister. Let us offer our sufferings to Jesus for the salvation of souls."

On July 18th, 1890, she again writes to her sister, speaking of the company that they must bear Jesus in His sufferings. Then she concludes her letter thus: "And our dear father! Ah! my heart is broken, but how can we complain since Our Lord Himself was looked on 'as one struck by God and afflicted' (Isaias liii. 4)? In this great sorrow, let us forget ourselves and let us pray for priests, let our life be consecrated to them. The divine Master makes me realize more and more that He wishes this of both of us."

The next letter was written on Tuesday the 23rd of September, 1890. It was on Wednesday, September 24th, that the Little Flower received the veil of Carmel. In her Autobiography she says of this day, "On the 24th of September the ceremony of my receiving the veil took place. This feast was, indeed, altogether veiled in tears. Papa was too unwell to come to bless his 'queen'; at the last moment Monsignor Hugonin, who was to preside, was himself hindered from coming. In a word, because of various other circumstances, everything was sadness and bitterness. Yet, peace always, peace, was for me at the bottom of the Chalice. That day Jesus allowed that I could not refrain from weeping, and

my tears were not understood. In fact, I had borne without weeping other trials much greater, but then I was helped by a powerful grace; whereas on the 24th, Jesus left me to my own strength and I showed how little it was."

It was on the eve of this day of the taking of the veil that the Little Flower wrote the following letter to her sister Céline, "Oh, Céline, how can I tell you what is taking place in my soul? What a wound! But I know that it is made by a loving hand, by a hand that is divinely jealous! Everything was ready for my espousals, but did you not find that something was wanting to my feast? It is true that Jesus had already put many jewels in my casket, but one was still lacking, no doubt; one of an incomparable beauty, and this precious diamond Jesus has given me to-day. Papa will not be able to come to-morrow! Céline I confess to you that I have wept. My tears still flow while I am writing to you, so that I can hardly hold my pen.

"You know how much I desired to see our dear father again. Well, now I know that it is the will of our dear Lord that he should not be present at my feast. He has allowed this simply to test our love.

"Jesus wishes me to be an orphan. He wishes me to be alone with Him alone, so that He may unite Himself more intimately to me, and He wishes also to give me, in our fatherland, the joys so lawfully desired which He has refused me during this exile. To-day's trial is a grief difficult to understand. A joy was offered to us, it was possible,

natural, we held out our hand—and we could not seize this consolation, so much longed for! But it is not a human hand which has done this. It is Jesus! Céline, understand your Theresa and let both of us accept with good heart the thorn which is offered us. The feast of to-morrow shall be a feast of tears for us, but I feel that Jesus will be so consoled."

Soon after their father had died, on August 19, 1894, the Little Flower wrote to Céline that she felt in a singular way the presence of this beloved father. "Our dear father," she says, "makes his presence felt in a manner which touches me profoundly. After a death of five long years, what joy to find him again as in other days, and more fatherly still than before! Oh, how he will return to you now the cares which you have lavished upon him! You have been his angel and he will be your angel in his turn. See now, it is not a month since he has gone to heaven, and already by his powerful intercession all your efforts are succeeding. Now it will be easy for him to arrange our affairs. And he had less to suffer for his Céline than he had for his poor little queen."

But there was yet another parting which tried the soul of St. Theresa, the hints of which we may read in the ninth chapter of her Autobiography. She had come indeed to dwell in Carmel with three of her sisters; Pauline, who took the name of Sister Agnes of Jesus; Marie, the oldest, who was called Sister Marie of the Sacred Heart; and Céline, who bore the name of Sister Genevieve of the Holy Face. But

those who know the nature of religious life are also aware that even sisters of the same family who live together in a community must endure a certain separation, a parting which is sometimes the more trying because they are so near, both in body and in spirit.

Addressing her Superior in religion, who had bidden her write the history of her soul, the Little Flower declares: "You know also, that Jesus has offered me more than one bitter chalice in regard to my dear sisters. Ah, the holy king David spoke truly when he sang, 'Behold how good and how pleasant it is for brethren to dwell together in unity' (Psalm cxxxii 1). But it is in the midst of sacrifices that this union must be accomplished on this earth. No, it was not to live with my sisters that I entered this blessed Carmel; I foresaw well, on the contrary, that this would be an occasion of great suffering, because nothing would happen as natural affection desired.

"How can people say that it is more perfect to separate oneself from one's own? Have brothers ever been reproached for fighting on the same battlefield, or for hastening together to gather the palm of martyrdom? Without doubt, people have truly thought that they encouraged mutually each other; but it is also true that the martyrdom of one becomes that of all.

"It is so likewise in the religious life, which the theologians call a martyrdom. In giving itself to God, the heart does not lose its natural tenderness.

This tenderness, on the contrary, increases and becomes more pure and divine. It is with this tenderness that I love you, my Mother in religion, and that I love my sisters. Yes, I am happy to fight together with my family for the glory of the King of Heaven, but I should be ready also to hasten to another battlefield if the divine General expressed to me the wish that I should do so. A command would not be necessary, but a simple look, a sign, would be enough."

Thus she strove to be detached in spirit, even from her dear sisters who were with her in the convent. She was even willing to separate from them in fact, if such were the will of God. "Since my entry into Carmel," she says, "I have always thought that if Jesus did not take me soon to heaven, my lot would be that of the little dove of Noah, that one day the Lord, opening the window of the Ark, would tell me to fly far away toward the pagan shores, carrying with me the olive branch. This thought made me soar above all created things. Understanding that even in Carmel there might be separations, I wished beforehand to fix my abode in the heavens. I have accepted in my heart not only to exile myself in the midst of an unknown people, but, what was much more bitter for me, I have accepted this exile from my sisters. Two of them, indeed, were asked for by the Carmel of Saïgon which our monastery founded. For some time there was serious question of sending them. Ah, I did not wish to say a word, to keep them back, though my heart was broken at

the thought of the trials which awaited them. Now all that is over. The Superiors put insuperable obstacles in the way of their leaving. I only wetted my lips at this chalice. I had barely time to taste its bitterness."

When she wrote these words, the Little Flower was already stricken with the fatal sickness which released her pure soul from earth. Yet, she was planning for another parting from her sisters in case she should be restored to health. "Let me tell you, my Mother," she says, "why, if the Holy Virgin cures me, I desire to respond to the appeal of our Mothers at Hanoï. It seems that to live in Carmel in foreign lands one must have a very special vocation. Many souls think themselves called to this without actually being so. You have told me, my Mother, that I have a vocation and that only my health is an obstacle to its accomplishment. Ah, if I had one day to leave my cradle in religion, it would not be without feeling the wound. I have not an unfeeling heart and it is just because I am capable of much suffering that I desire to give to Jesus all the pangs that I can bear. Here I am loved by you, my Mother, and by all my sisters, and this affection is very sweet to me. That is why I dream of a monastery where I shall be unknown, where I shall have to suffer the exile of the heart."

We have linked together these sayings of the Little Flower which are found in various places in her Autobiography and in her letters, so as to show more clearly the depth of her feeling, and the keenness

with which she felt the pangs and separations which her vocation imposed on her. At the same time these words show very clearly also the workings of God's grace in her soul, and with what heroic love she strove to drink to the depths the chalice of bitterness, overcoming her heart in its earthly love for the sake of her heavenly love, yet losing nothing of the sweetness of her natural feelings. This is the triumph of divine charity in the religious life. It does, indeed, crucify and kill the selfishness of the human heart, but it ennobles and intensifies its natural love and tenderness toward those whom God wishes it to cherish.

CHAPTER VI

THE LITTLE FLOWER AND HER LOVE FOR NATURE

NATURE is a beautiful and various book in which we may read the loveliness and power, the generosity and goodness of God. It is the purpose of nature to shadow forth to our eyes the glory of God, His kindness, His mercy, His love for us and for all of His creation. The contemplation of the beauties of this world, is meant to lift our hearts to the unimagined ecstasies of heaven. The wonderful harmony of earth and skies, the charm of the varying seasons, the sweet chalices of tinted flowers, the splendors of the changing skies, clouds with their apocalyptic splendors, sun and rain with their various measures of delight, the white snow of winter and the blossom snow of summer, mountains and valleys, lakes, rivers and streams with their gushing coolness and their sweet abundance to slake the thirst of all the earth—these things are meant by God's all-providing love to enable us to draw closer to Him, the Author and Planner of this widespread harmony and loveliness.

But mankind, proud, wayward, impatient of control, intent on its own ends and neglectful of the pur-

poses of God, has sadly misused the beautiful world which God has given for our contemplation and delight. A nature worship, pagan in its inspiration, materialistic in its tendencies, has stolen the universe from God and perverted the lovelinesses of earth and sky and sea to a pantheistic or an agnostic cult of mere natural beauty. Too many poets and scientists have sadly conspired, some to sing the creature and ignore the Creator, the others to search out and describe all the myriad wonders of God's handiwork while refusing to give credit, or even credence to the divine Creator.

This crime of the neglect of God, this deliberate turning of the back upon God, while admiring and enjoying the beauty of His creation, is one of the most grievous abuses of our time. And when the name of God is used in these poems or scientific treatises of which we speak, it is used, not to reverence and adore, to thank and praise, the three Infinite Persons of the One Creative Trinity, but it is employed as a mere convenient abstraction, as a conventional word for the forces of nature. The personal love, the ardent enthusiasm and devotion, the zealous adoration which we should cherish and express for God, our Creator and our Lord, is denied Him by some of those who study with the greatest enthusiasm and delight the beauties or the wonders of His handiwork.

Was it not to rebuke these self-sufficient and unjust ignorers of God's rights as Artist and Architect of creation that He has directed the bright

gleam of His glory upon the humble chalice of the Little Flower and has made manifest, through her touching Autobiography, the delight she had in all natural beauty and the vivid realization that was hers of the close relation of nature to God? St. Theresa, in her delight in natural beauty and her quick perception of the symbolic meaning of earth's loveliness, has a kinship with many simple and humble souls of our time who love God's world for the sake of its Maker and who cherish in their hearts appreciations and realizations of poetic beauty, even though they may not have the power of expression which would enable them to give forth in poetic form the emotions which thrill their souls.

From her earliest childhood the Little Flower delighted in natural beauty. She tells us, as we have recorded, how she loved to play in the garden, not caring for dolls, but delighting in making colored mixtures with seeds of the bark of trees. She was very fond of flowers and was enchanted when she was chosen to strew blossoms before the Blessed Sacrament. Indeed, the name which she has selected to describe herself, and the explanation which she gives of this title, contain in themselves an eloquent instance of her love of nature and her supernatural interpretation of its beauties.

"I had often asked myself," she says, "why our good God had preferences, why all souls did not receive an equal measure of graces? I was surprised to see Him lavish extraordinary favors on great sinners like St. Paul, St. Augustine, St. Magdalen,

and so many others whom He forced, so to speak, to receive His graces. I was astonished again, in reading the Lives of the Saints, to see Our Lord caress from the cradle to the tomb some privileged souls without leaving in their way any single obstacle which might hinder them from mounting up toward Him, never permitting sin to tarnish the spotless and immaculate brilliance of their baptismal robe. I asked myself why the poor savages, for instance, should die in such great numbers without even having heard the name of God spoken.

"Jesus has vouchsafed to instruct me concerning this mystery. He has put before my eyes the book of nature and I have understood that all flowers created by Him are beautiful, that the brightness of the rose and the whiteness of the lily, do not steal away the perfume of the little violet, nor lessen the ravishing simplicity of the daisy. I have understood that if all the little flowers wished to be roses, nature would lose its springtime garment, the fields would no longer be enameled with little flowers.

"It is so, too, in the world of souls, the living garden of the Lord. He has found it well to create great saints who can be compared to lilies and to roses. But He has also created the lesser ones who must be satisfied with being daisies or simple violets, destined to rejoice His divine eyes when He lowers them to His feet. The more these flowers are happy to do His will, the more perfect they are."

She draws delightful lessons from the contemplation of the little flowers. "I have understood another

thing, still," she continues; "I have understood that the love of Our Lord reveals itself as well in the most simple soul which does not resist His grace in anything, as in the soul which is most sublime. Indeed, it is the characteristic of love to abase itself. If all souls resembled those of the holy Doctors who have been the glory of the Church, it seems that the good God would not have stooped low enough in coming only to them. But He has created the child who knows nothing and can make itself heard only by feeble cries; He has created the poor savage who has to guide him only the natural law and it is even to their hearts that He deigns to stoop down.

"These are the flowers of the field," she goes on, "whose simplicity ravishes Him; and by this act of condescending so low the Lord shows His infinite greatness. Just as the sun lights up at the same time the lofty cedar and the little flower, so does the divine Sun shine upon every soul, great or little, and all correspond to His goodness as in nature the seasons are so disposed as to make the humblest daisy unfold on the appointed day its tiny petals."

The beauty and luminous charm of this comparison breathes a love of nature and a comprehension of its true meaning which is touching and sincere. She continues to develop this comparison. "Because I was to be the spouse of Jesus at so early an age," she says at the end of the first chapter of her life, "it was necessary for me to suffer from my very childhood. Just as the flowers of spring commence to bud forth under the snow, and bloom at the

first rays of the sun, so too, the Little Flower whose tale I am writing, had to pass through the winter of trial and to see her tender chalice filled with the dew of tears."

Just before this passage, she had declared the delight of her childish heart during the Sunday walks taken with her mother to behold the fields of wheat enameled with cornflowers, with poppies and with daisies. Already, she declares the long, far distances, the wide blue space of the sunlit heavens, the breathing and mighty branches of great living trees, ravished her soul with delight. Even at that early age, thoughts, poetic and profound, would come to her upon the nodding cups of summer flowers.

At the conclusion of the second chapter of her Life, she describes for us the impression produced upon her childish heart and mind by her first sight of the majestic ocean. It has been said that the sight of the sea makes an enduring change in the soul, that no one is quite the same after having beheld for the first time that image of eternity, that profound and trackless solitude of waters whose unbounded greatness and perpetual strength body forth to the vision the grandeur and immensity of God.

"When I was about six or seven years old," she says, "I for the first time beheld the ocean. This spectacle made upon me a profound impression, and I could not take my eyes away from it. The majesty of the sea, the roaring of its waves, all spoke to my soul of the grandeur and power of the good God." On the coast of Normandy, where the little Theresa

first saw with rapturous delight the mighty ocean, the coast is varied and beautiful.

Once, not long ago, on a day that we were about to sail from Cherbourg, we found ourselves with some hours of leisure before the sailing time when the tender would come to carry passengers to the ship. These hours were delightfully employed in a long walk along the strand. Looking from these pleasant shores over the heaving bosom of the ocean, we could see in fancy the charming little child of seven years, gazing over the same tossing multitude of waves and seeing with her clear childish eyes what the proud glance of unbelieving poets and scientists could not discern, the greatness and the power of God expressed in His world of living waters.

"The evening of that day," continues the Little Flower, "at the hour when the sun seems to bathe himself in the immensity of the waves, leaving behind him a luminous furrow of glory, I went to sit with Pauline on a barren rock. I contemplated for a long time that furrow of gold which she told me was the image of grace illuminating here below the way of faithful souls. Then I pictured my heart in the midst of that furrow, like a light little bark with a graceful white sail, and I took the resolution never to withdraw it from the sight of Jesus, so that it might sail swiftly and in peace toward the shores of heaven."

During her brief life in the world the Little Flower dwelt in the midst of natural loveliness. As we have remarked, her home, Les Buissonnets, was

a charming abode in the midst of a pleasant garden which surrounded the house. She used to walk, too, with her father through the countryside on their little fishing excursions, and the calm loveliness of the landscape of Normandy, the apple trees in bloom, the spring flowers, daisies, buttercups, the cornflowers, with their radiant tints, early seized her youthful fancy.

When she had the privilege of going with her father and sister on the pilgrimage to Rome, some of the most magnificent of the world's scenery unrolled itself before her delighted vision; and as she crossed the Alps into the wonderland of Italy, her heart must have been inundated with delight at the natural loveliness and sacred memories of that favored land. The splendors of the Alpine scenery particularly impressed her childish memory. "Before reaching the goal of our pilgrimage," she says, in the sixth chapter of her Autobiography, "we passed through Switzerland with its lofty mountains whose snowy summits were lost in the clouds with its cascades, its deep valleys filled with gigantic ferns and with ruddy heather. Ah, my dearly beloved Mother in religion," she continues, "how much good these beauties of nature, thus profusely scattered about me, have done to my soul. They lifted me up toward Him who has been pleased to strew such masterpieces upon a land of exile which is to last only a day!

"Sometimes," she continues, with a vivid recollection of the sublime scenery which she beheld from

the window of the swiftly moving express which bore her through Switzerland, "sometimes, we were lifted up even to the tops of the mountains. At our feet the precipices, of which our eyes could not pierce the depths, seemed to wish to swallow us up. Farther on we would be passing through a charming village with its chalets and its graceful spire above which light clouds were floating drowsily. Here again would be a vast lake with waves calm and pure, of which the azure tint would blend with the fires of the sunset.

"How can I tell of my impressions in the presence of this spectacle so poetic and so full of grandeur?" she proceeds. "I tasted in advance the marvels of heaven . . . religious life appeared to me then such as it really is, with its subjections, its little daily sacrifices, accomplished in secret. I understood, then, how easy it would be to grow wrapped up in oneself, to forget the sublime end of one's vocation, and I said to myself, 'Later on, in the hour of trial, when, prisoner in Carmel, I shall be able to see but a little bit of sky, I will remember to-day. This spectacle will give me courage. I will no longer count my own little interests when I think of the greatness and the power of God; I will love Him alone and I will not have the misfortune to attach myself to trifles, now that my heart beholds what He has in reserve for those who love Him.' "

She describes also the beautiful journey by the Mediterranean, which travelers along the Riviera will so well remember, when the train runs at the

very shore of the sea and when the sparkling waters splash almost to the wheels of the train. "After we had passed through Pisa and Genoa," she says, "we returned to France by one of the most splendid of routes. At times we traversed the very border of the sea and one day, when a storm had been upon the waters, the railroad track ran so close to the beach that it seemed as though the waves were curling up to the very train. Farther on," she continues, "we traversed plains covered with orange trees, with olives and with graceful palm trees. In the evening the many ports of the sea which we passed, lighted up with twinkling lamps just as the deep blue sky was sparkling with its earliest stars. This picture of fairyland, I watched fade away without regret. My heart was longing for other and different marvels."

Needless to say, like all lovers of nature, the Little Flower delighted in the stars. We have already related how she beheld in the constellation Orion the initial of her name Theresa written in light on the heavens. She tells in the fifth chapter of her Autobiography how she and her sister Céline, used to contemplate together the beauty of the starry galaxies. "With what sweetness," she says, "I recall our conversations at that time! Every evening at the belvidere, we plunged together our eager looks into the deep dark blue of the sky sown with golden stars. It seems to me that we received very great graces then. As the *Imitation* declares, 'God sometimes communicates Himself in the midst of a vivid

splendor, at other times sweetly hidden beneath shadows and figures.' So He deigned to manifest Himself to our hearts, but how transparent and subtle was the veil! Already faith and hope quitted our souls. Love made us find on earth Him whom we sought! Having found us alone, He gave us His kiss and now no man may despise us."

She delighted, too, in a special way, in the snows of winter. On the happy day of her clothing in the habit of Carmel, her father had recovered from a second attack, contrary to all expectations, and the Bishop had fixed the ceremony for January 10th. "The time of waiting," she says, "had been long, but even so, what a delightful feast! Nothing was wanting, not even the snow. Do you remember my speaking to you, my Mother, about my predilection for the snow? When I was a little child its whiteness ravished me with joy.

"Whence came this fancy of mine for the snow? Perhaps it was that, being myself a little flower of winter, the first garment in which my childish eyes beheld the earth envestured was its mantle of white. So on the day of my clothing I longed to see nature decked like myself in white. But the day before, the temperature was so warm that one would have thought it springtime, and I no longer hoped for snow. On the 10th, in the morning, there was no change of temperature, so I gave up my childish wish as impossible of realization."

She then describes the meeting with her father at the monastery door, the solemn entry into the

public chapel, and her return to the convent. "The moment that I put my foot in the cloister," she says, "my looks fell first on my pretty little statue of the Child Jesus [it was her charge to keep the flowers and the light before this statue] which smiled at me from the midst of flowers and lights. Then, turning toward the quadrangle, I saw that it was all covered with snow! What a delicate kindness of my Jesus; satisfying all the wishes of His little spouse, He gave her even the snow she wished. Who is the mortal, powerful though he may be, who can make one flake of snow fall from heaven to charm his dearly beloved?

"Everyone was astonished to see this snow and thought it a veritable event by reason of the very mild temperature. Since the occurrence, many who knew of my wish speak often, I know, 'of the little miracle of my clothing day.' They think it strange that I have the singular taste of loving the snow. So much the better, it makes still more remarkable the incomprehensible condescension of the Spouse of Virgins, of Him who loves lilies white as snow."

The Little Flower delighted to observe, as we have said, that in the important occurrences of her life the aspects of nature reflected her own emotions. Speaking of her desolation during the time when she was striving to be admitted, young as she was, to Carmel, she describes this coincidence of her feelings and the weather. "Before allowing a ray of hope to shine upon my soul," she says, "Our Lord wished to send me another very painful martyrdom which

lasted three days. Oh! never had I so well understood the bitter sorrow of the holy Virgin and St. Joseph when they were searching the streets of Jerusalem for the divine child Jesus.

"I found myself in a terrible desert, or rather my soul was like a fragile skiff abandoned without a pilot to the mercy of the stormy waves. I knew that Jesus was there, sleeping in my little boat, but how could I see Him in the midst of such a dark night? If the storm had burst openly, a flash of lightning might perhaps have made its way through my clouds. True, the lightning sheds but a sorrowful brilliance, still, by its light I should have seen the Beloved of my heart at least for an instant.

"But no, it was night, deepest night, utter desolation, a veritable death! Like the divine Master in the agony of the garden, I felt myself alone, and found no consolation either from earth or from heaven. Nature seemed to take part in my bitter sadness," she continues; "during these three days the sun did not display a single beam and the rain fell in torrents." Then she confides to her Mother in religion the singular sympathy which she has noticed between her life and the life of nature.

"I have always observed," she says, "that in all the circumstances of my life nature has been the image of my soul. When I wept, the heavens wept with me; when I rejoiced, the blue of the firmament was unshadowed by any cloud." She goes on to describe some instances of this sympathy of the heavens. Soon after the period of desolation and of

rain which she has been describing, she went to see her uncle. She was afraid that he would still be opposed to her vocation. He had declared, on first learning of her desire to enter Carmel, that to go to such a severe Order at the age of fifteen seemed against all common sense, and that he should oppose it in every way possible,—that nothing short of a miracle would make him change his mind.

"What was my surprise to find him entirely changed toward me?" says St. Theresa. "First, without my asking it, he made me enter into his study. Then, beginning by addressing gentle reproaches to me for being a little embarrassed with him, he told me that the miracle was no longer necessary, that having prayed the good Lord to give him a simple inclination of the heart, he had obtained his wish. I no longer recognized him, he embraced me with the tenderness of a father and said to me, in a tone of voice full of feeling, 'Go in peace, my dear child, you are a privileged little flower which the Lord wishes to gather. I will no longer oppose it.'

"With what joyfulness I retraced the way toward Les Buissonnets, *beneath the clear sky from which the clouds had completely vanished.* In my soul also the night had disappeared. Jesus had awakened and had given me back my joy, I no longer heard the noise of the waves. Instead of the wind of trial, a light breeze filled my sail and I fancied myself safe in port."

This sympathy with nature, this love of natural beauty, the exulting delight which St. Theresa took

in all the earth's loveliness are in themselves poetic and touching evidences of the sensitiveness of her nature to the beauty of creation. But what is specially noteworthy in her love of nature is its constant tendency to see the hand of God in all His creation and to praise God and love Him for His marvelous works. She never dwelt upon natural loveliness without beholding in it an image of the Uncreated Beauty. Her heart never leapt with joy at the splendor of an earthly prospect, at the beauty of a flower, or the burning radiance of the sunset, without acknowledging with grateful tenderness the uncreated Power and Goodness who had brought all these things to be for her delight.

It is precisely this aspect of the Little Flower's love of natural beauty which the world most needs to learn. It requires indeed a special effort of the intelligence and will to rise from earth to heaven, to seek in the grandeur of the world the greatness of its Creator, to read in the great book of natural beauty the message of Uncreated Loveliness which the Infinite Writer meant it to convey.

The poetic works of the Little Flower are full of the same constant desire to rise from the beauties of earth to the glories of heaven. She did not attempt the sublime flights of the greatest poetry. Her rhythms are simple and unpretending, her lines full of the same frank and tender simplicity which is the characteristic of her Autobiography. But her prose and verse convey the self-same message. She is forever seeking to turn all things toward God, to give

him glory in all her joys and sufferings, to rise from earthly things toward heaven.

Thus, the Little Flower is a poet in the greatest sense of that much-abused word, in that she has seen the real meaning of earthly beauty and has learned to rise from the contemplation of known loveliness to the infinite beauties which we shall only see in heaven. Having accomplished this, she has made her own life a poem more beautiful than any which her pen has written. She has understood and carried out the purpose of the beauty of nature, which is to enable us to rise to the love of God upon the wings of heavenly contemplation.

CHAPTER VII

THE GREAT IMPORTANCE OF LITTLE THINGS

WHEN St. John Berchmans was canonized there were some persons who asked themselves what he had ever done to merit so signal an honor. He was, when he died, but twenty-two years of age, three years younger than the Little Flower. He had been all his life a very good and dutiful child, a holy youth, an exemplary student in the Society of Jesus. But his chief glory was that he had perfectly observed all the constitutions and laws of the Society of Jesus, in which he had spent only five years. This perfect observance of his rule consisted, in great part, of the faithful doing of little things. He had never had the opportunity of accomplishing anything great or distinguished in the eyes of the world, and yet he was chosen from among so many other holy youths for the supreme honor of canonization. What had he done to deserve so great a distinction?

So the question was put, but the answer was not long in coming. "St. John Berchmans," was the reply, "deserves the honors of the altar because he did little things so perfectly and with so great a love. He declared often that the preferred to die rather than violate the least of the rules of the Society

which he had entered, though these rules in themselves do not bind under pain of sin. "I will pay the greatest attention," he said, "to the least inspiration of God. I will make much of little things and to do them perfectly for the love of God." He saw, and fulfilled, the will of God in the least detail of his holy rules. The canonization of St. John Berchmans, therefore, was a proof of the importance which the Church and the Church's Founder attach to the perfect performance of little deeds.

To anyone who attentively considers the career of the Little Flower, it will be plain that God had wished in her person to teach the world, once again, the lesson of the heroism which may hide in little things. During all her life the Little Flower had even less occasion of appearing in public and doing notable deeds than had St. John Berchmans during his short career. He lived in Rome, the center of the religious world, and was often seen abroad with his brethren in their walks. He took part in public disputations in philosophy and must have been well known for his sanctity even to the general body of the faithful in the Eternal City, because it is told in his biography that when he died great throngs of persons crowded for several days to venerate his relics.

The Little Flower, on the other hand, lived quite unknown except to a small circle of affectionate relatives and friends and to a scarcely larger group of Sisters in religion after she had entered the Carmel. When she died, the knowledge of her holiness must

indeed have been quite widespread in Lisieux, for it is said that a large crowd passed before the grating of the nun's chapel to look upon her mortal remains. But she had never performed any public or splendid action and she died at the age of twenty-five when it would have been very unusual for a maiden in her position to have accomplished anything extraordinary or glorious in the way of exterior achievement.

Yet in a wonderfully short time devotion to the Little Flower had spread over the entire world. There are few examples in the history of the Church where Catholics everywhere so suddenly conceived so great a devotion for one so recently departed from this world. Such has been the intensity of this devotion and so great is the fervor of the faithful, so many the spiritual and temporal favors experienced by them through the intercession of the Little Flower that the long series of decades usually required for the process of beatification and canonization has been reduced to a few years, although the general tendency of the Church in such matters is to make more and more severe the requirements for raising one of the faithful to the honors of the altar.

When we read attentively the Autobiography of the Little Flower, however, we discover the secret of the great favor which she enjoyed with God. She performed the slightest actions with an interior intention which was heroic and wonderful. She cultivated in her heart the holy dispositions of a martyr

and a confessor, making her desires far outrun the little deeds she found to do, and showing by her heroic fidelity in little things what great deeds she would have accomplished if God had wished to give her the opportunity.

The lives of holy persons constantly teach us that God is always willing, to use an old expression, "To take the will for the deed." Providing our will is absolutely right and pure, providing we desire with great sincerity and complete honesty to love God greatly and serve Him greatly even in little things, He takes our good will, expressed in little deeds, as though it had flowered out into great and noble achievements. The glory of the saints consists not so much in the splendid exploits which they perform, as in the constant interior desire they entertain of doing greater and greater things for God.

This is a lesson which the world sorely needs to learn. There is a tendency more and more clearly marked in the world of to-day to look only to exterior achievement and to discount the value of the interior intention. What is seen, what appears on the surface, is taken as the test of personal worth. The inward motive is but little considered. On the other hand, men readily excuse themselves for evil desires and bad intentions by the plea that they have done no one an injury. They only count those things as wrong which are seen by men and occasion them blame and punishment. That God reads the secrets of hearts, that He is pleased by good will and displeased by evil, that His supreme rights are injured

(*Above*) View from the Belvidere at Les Buissonnets
(*Below*) The Shrine in the Garden at Les Buissonnets
(*Photograph by the Author*)

by even the most secret ties, seems to affect them little or not at all.

Perhaps this is one of the reasons why God has made the Little Flower so glorious after her death. He allowed her to remain in complete obscurity until she had come to rejoin Him in heaven. He kept her hidden, first in the bosom of her family, then in the cloister of Carmel, all her short life. Though she had talents of an exceptional kind, a sweet and winning personality, the soul of an apostle, and a great desire to do something notable for the glory of God, He removed from her the occasion of all great exterior actions. With her vivid personality, her power of attracting hearts, He chose to give her a contemplative vocation, the very essence of which is complete withdrawal from the world. It was, humanly speaking, impossible for her at the same time to follow the rule of Carmel and to satisfy her burning desire of being a missionary and an apostle.

But by the hidden power of her inward intention, by performing little deeds with heroic love, by becoming perfect in what might have seemed trifling exercises of charity toward God and her neighbor, the Little Flower has achieved a world-wide fame and apostolate. In all human probability she will continue for years on years, nay for centuries upon centuries, to be an apostle of God's glory. Through the hidden fidelities of her obscure days at home, at school, and afterward in the cloister, she has done more for the glory of God than if she had led conquering armies or written deathless poems.

The secret of all the saints, an open secret which yet the world finds it so hard to learn, is the secret of the love of God. The one sublimest motive, the one supreme wisdom, the greatest source of merit, the most pleasing intention in the sight of the Most High is the pure love of God. To love God for His own sake, because He is so good in Himself and so worthy of all our love, makes the slightest action endlessly meritorious.

"Love God," says St. Augustine, "and do what you please." And this sublime saying has a twofold significance. First, it assures us that if we love God, we shall never choose to do anything except what pleases Him; and therefore if we love God, whatever we do will be grateful to God. But it has also another meaning, perhaps not so generally understood; namely that if we love God anything we do because of that love will be pleasing to Him.

Whether we perform little actions or great ones in the sight of men, whether our life is illustrious and public or hidden and obscure, we shall equally please God. "Love God and do what you please" embodies a whole philosophy of life, a life entirely motived by inward love. In the tenth chapter of her Autobiography, the Little Flower describes the manner in which God has revealed this secret to her and tells us something of the little deeds, obscure and lowly, trifling in themselves but great in the sight of God, in which the Little Flower has expressed this divine charity.

"My venerated Mother in religion," she says, "the

good God has given me the grace to penetrate the mysterious depths of love. If I could express what I understand, you would hear a melody of heaven. But, alas, I have only the stammering syllables of a child. And if the words of Jesus did not serve me as a support, I should be tempted to ask your permission to remain silent. When the divine Master tells me," she continues, "to give to whoever asks of me and to let what belongs to me be taken without asking it back, I think that He is speaking, not only of the goods of the earth, but that He means also the goods of heaven. Besides, neither the one nor the other belongs to me; I have renounced the former by the vow of poverty, and the latter are likewise lent to me by God, who can take them away from me without my being able to complain.

"But one's own thoughts, profound and personal, the fruit of our intelligence and of our heart, form a wealth to which one is attached as to one's own possession, which no one else has the right to touch. For example, if I communicate to one of my sisters some light that I have received in prayer, and if she reveals it afterward, as though it came from herself, it seems as though she appropriates what is mine. Or, if one says in a low voice to one's neighbor during recreation something witty and appropriate and if she, without acknowledging its source, repeats the saying aloud, that seems a sort of theft from the one who made the remark. She, even though she does not claim what is hers, is naturally disposed to

take the first occasion to let people know in a delicate way that her thoughts have been appropriated."

It may seem to some persons a slight thing to allow one's happy thoughts to be claimed by another, but those who know religious life are also aware that these small self-renunciations often require great virtue. Those who have given up everything in the way of personal possessions have still, as the *Imitation* tells us, to take another step and to give up themselves. One may be capable of great sacrifices yet not have achieved to the perfection of little ones. Indeed, to be perfect in great things is not so rare, but to be perfect in trifles is quite extraordinary. The Little Flower herself had found this out by trials and by failures as well as by successes. She had observed the difficulty of these little sacrifices in the case of others as well.

"My Mother," she continues, "I could not so well describe to you these pitiful weaknesses of nature if I had not experienced them myself; and I should have liked to nurse the sweet allusion that they were peculiar to myself if you had not ordered me to listen to the novices telling their trials. I have learnt a great deal in fulfilling the mission which you entrusted to me. Above all, I have found myself forced to practise what I taught to them."

Yet, these struggles with the natural inclination to claim one's own thoughts and rights had left the Little Flower victorious. "Yes," she continues, "now I can say with truth that I have received the grace to be no longer any more attached to the gifts

of intellect and of heart than to material possessions. If I happen to think and to say something which pleases my Sisters, I find it quite natural that they should take it for their own. That thought belongs to the Holy Spirit and not to me, since St. Paul assures us that without this spirit of love we cannot call God our Father (ROMANS viii. 15). He is then quite free to use me to give a good thought to the soul of another, and I have no right to think that the thought is my own possession."

The affectionate heart of St. Theresa had to struggle, as all hearts must do, to turn her affections toward others into spiritual love, not intent on selfish satisfaction but on pleasing God and cherishing Him in the person of His children. She speaks of the help she was able to give to one of her Sisters who loved the prioress of the convent with too natural and human an affection. St. Theresa gently pointed out to her her mistake.

"I pressed her to my heart," she says, "and told her with tenderness all that I thought about her. I showed her in what veritable love consists and convinced her that in loving her prioress with a natural affection it was really herself whom she loved. I confided to her the sacrifices which I had to make in this regard in the beginning of my religious life, and very soon her tears were mingled with mine. She acknowledged very humbly her faults, admitted that I was right, and promised me to commence a new life, asking me as a favor always to warn her of her faults. From this moment our affection be-

came entirely spiritual and the oracle of the Holy Spirit was realized in us. 'A brother that is helped by his brother is like a strong city' (PROVERBS xviii. 19).

"Oh, my Mother, you know well that I had not the intention to turn my companion away from you. I wished only to tell her that true love is nourished on sacrifices and that the more the soul refuses itself natural satisfaction, the more its tenderness becomes strong and disinterested."

St. Theresa then goes on to tell of the struggles which she had to make in the beginning of her religious life in order to avoid being guided by her personal desires and feelings. "I remember," she said, "that when I was a postulant I had sometimes such violent temptations to seek my own satisfaction and to find some little drops of joy that I was obliged to hurry quickly past your cell and to cling to the banisters of the staircase so as not to return on my steps.

"A quantity of permissions came to my mind that I might ask of you, a thousand pretexts for yielding to my natural wishes and satisfying them. How happy I am now to have denied myself from the beginning of my religious life. I now enjoy the reward promised to those who fight bravely. I no longer feel it necessary to refuse myself the consolations of the heart, because my heart is fixed on God. Because it has loved Him alone, it has grown little by little until it can give to those who are dear to Him a tenderness incomparably deeper than if

it had centered itself in a selfish and unfruitful affection."

If anyone should think that these early struggles and little victories of the Little Flower are childish and slight, he need only remember that all our mortal affairs are so. We are but children of a larger growth and our loves and cares are in themselves passing and trivial. But God considers not "the gift of the lover, but the love of the giver." He deigns to look at the intention more than at the deed, and in gaining these little victories, St. Theresa, as the event has gloriously proved, was meriting a great reward. It is part of the significance of her simple story that she shows once again, as so many other saints have done, the possibilities of heroism in a life altogether hidden from the world. Her struggles and her successes in little things encourage the great multitude of mankind, who can never be outwardly heroic to realize the heroism of little things, of little victories, of actions which are hard to nature, done perfectly and achieved with an heroic spirit for the love of God.

With that childlike candor which is one of the great charms of her life-story St. Theresa relates some further instances of her struggles and victories in little things. Again it is those who are most familiar with the religious life and its little trials and difficulties who will most appreciate these vivid pictures. After speaking of the consolation that she felt in her later days in doing acts of charity, the Little Flower declares, "I have not always practised

charity with such transports of joy. At the commencement of my religious life, Jesus wished to make me feel how sweet it is to see charity in the soul of His spouses. So, when I led Sister St. Pierre [she had been given care of this poor Sister who was an invalid and had to be taken to and from the refectory] I did it with so much love that it would have been impossible for me to show more if I had been guiding Our Lord Himself.

"The practise of charity," she continues, "has not always been so sweet for me. I frankly confess, my dear Mother. To prove this to you, I am going to tell you about some of my many combats. For a long time my place, while at prayer, was quite near that of a Sister who kept continually rattling either her rosary or some other object. Perhaps I was the only one who heard her, for I have an extremely delicate sense of hearing, but I cannot describe to you how tired I got of it. I would have liked to turn my head and give the offender a look so as to make her stop her noise. Still, in the depths of my heart, I knew that it would be better to suffer the annoyance patiently, first for the love of God, and then, too, so as to avoid giving her pain.

"So I remained quiet; but sometimes I was bathed with perspiration and obliged simply to make a prayer of my suffering. Finally I tried to find a way to suffer with peace and joy, at least in the depths of my soul. Then I tried to love the disagreeable little rattling. In place of endeavoring not to hear it, which would have been quite impos-

sible, I directed my attention to listening to it well, as though it had been a ravishing concert, and my meditation, *which certainly was not a prayer of quiet,* was passed in offering this concert to Jesus."

The quaint little sentence in italics casts a gleam of humor over the charming relation. The Little Flower knew quite well that her achievement was not a noble one exteriorly, but she knew too that even these childish victories were greatly pleasing to Our Lord because of her inward love and great desire to please His Sacred Heart. Straightway she gives another example of a similar little, but most glorious, conquest. "On a further occasion," she says, "I was working in the laundry opposite a Sister who, while washing the handkerchiefs, kept splashing me with dirty water at every moment. My first impulse was to start back and wipe my face so as to show the Sister who was sprinkling me in this fashion that she would do me a favor by being a little less vigorous in her motions. But straightway the thought came to me that I was very foolish in refusing the treasures which were being offered to me so generously, and I carefully refrained from letting my annoyance be seen. On the contrary, I made every effort to desire to receive a great deal of the dirty water, so that at the end of a half hour I had really taken a liking to this new kind of aspersion and I promised myself to come back as often as possible to the happy place where such riches were so freely given."

Again, a little victory yet motived with great love. No doubt the Little Flower has related these

small triumphs to show the immense importance of little things. "My Mother," she says straightway, "you see that I am a very little soul who can offer to the good Lord only very little things. Indeed it still happens to me to let slip the occasion to offer even these little sacrifices which gives so much peace to the heart. But even that does not discourage me. I endure the loss of a little peace and I strive to be more vigilant at other times."

In the last chapter of her Autobiography, after she has spoken of the immense desires which burn in her heart, after she has declared that she longed to be a priest, an apostle, a martyr, a doctor of the Church, a crusader, to die on the field of battle in defense of Holy Church, she returns to the efficacy of little deeds to show great inward love.

"Yes, my Well-Beloved," she says, "it is thus that my life is consumed for You. I have no other means of proving to You my love than by strewing flowers before You; that is to say, by letting no little sacrifice escape me, no look, no word, by profiting by the least actions and doing them from love. I wish to suffer for love and even to rejoice for love of You, so I shall cast flowers before You. I shall never meet one such flower without scattering its petals for You . . . and then I will sing, I will sing always, even though I have to pluck my roses from the midst of thorns. My song shall be all the sweeter, the more these thorns are long and piercing."

She goes on to estimate the value of these little flowers, these small deeds of sacrifice and fidelity

done with immense love. With prophetic vision, she predicts the shower of favors which will fall from heaven upon the Church Militant and the Church Triumphant as a result of her little sacrifices. The shower or roses of which she so confidently spoke and which is now so wonderfully pouring down from heaven is the reward and the fruition of the little deeds and prayers of her hidden days.

"But of what use, my Jesus," she says, "are my flowers and my songs to You? Ah, I know it well, this fragrant rain, these fragile petals of little worth, these songs of love from a little heart will charm You, all the same. Yes, these things of nothing, these trifles will give You pleasure. They will make the Church Trimphant smile; and she, wishing to play with her little child, will gather up these scattered roses and, putting them in Your divine hands so as to give them an infinite value, she will shower them on the Church Suffering so as to put out its flames, and upon the Church Militant so as to give it victory."

Then she quotes the splendid saying of St. John of the Cross, which contains a noble vindication of her confidence in the power of love. "Oh, my Jesus," she exclaims, "I love You, I love the Church, my Mother, and I remember that *the most slight movement of pure love is more useful to her than all other good works put together.*" It is thus the sublime vocation of the Little Flower to make known once more to the world the great importance of little things done for the love of God and to impress upon

us once more the power of little souls who act with great love, greatly to move the loving heart of Christ. The last sentences of her Autobiography clearly proclaim this vocation.

"O Jesus," she cries out, "why cannot I tell all the little souls of Your unspeakable condescension! I know that if by an impossible supposition You could find one more weak than mine, You would delight in loading her with still greater favors provided she would abandon herself with an entire confidence to Your infinite mercy. But why these desires to communicate Your secrets of love, O my dearly Beloved! Is it not You alone who have taught them to me and can You not reveal them to others? Yes, I know You can and I beseech You to do it; I beg You to cast Your divine regard on a great number of little souls; I beg You to choose in this world a legion of little victims worthy of Your love!"

Few lessons are more important than this, that sanctity does not require the doing of great deeds, but only the performance of little actions with much love. Life is made up of little things, of little duties, of little sufferings, of little works and little sacrifices. Even to the most heroic personages, the opportunity of performing illustrious actions comes comparatively seldom. The great tissue of life is woven of the warp and woof of little threads of daily circumstance.

To do each thing well for the love of God, to offer up each little thought and word and action, as it

comes, for the pure love of God, is to turn the single threads of life's great web to gold. Strand by strand we must weave the perfect beauty of design which now only the angels' eyes can see, but which makes for our soul a garment of glory that will last for all eternity.

If it were necessary to do splendid and striking deeds in order to become a saint, the great majority of the human race would have to despair of sanctity, for it is only the exceptional individual, gifted alike in talent and circumstance, who can do striking and glorious things. But everyone, however humble his gifts or obscure his station, may imitate the fidelity of the Little Flower in little things, and may learn her lesson of the great love of God in daily and insignificant actions.

God rewards our deeds, not for their exterior value, but for their interior intention. The mere statement of this truth makes us assent to it, yet how little we realize its great significance. We are still inclined to judge by outward seeming, to think ourselves deprived of occasions of sanctity if we have to lead an obscure and wearisome life, a round of tedious duties removed from human observation. Let us thoughtfully consider the example of the Little Flower. No one's life could be more hidden than was hers, more destitute of opportunities of exterior greatness, more unlikely in the world's judgment to be illustrious and sublime. She had, nevertheless, a great desire to glorify God in many ways.

While she lived, this desire seemed impossible

of accomplishment. Would not she, like so many other holy Religious, die in the obscurity of the cloister, be buried in consecrated ground, fade from the memories of men and only realize the great yearning she had, to glorify God, when on the judgment day the beauty and the splendor of her soul should be revealed to the assembled generations of mankind? So it would have been in the ordinary course of God's providence. But in this instance He has chosen to lift the veil which hides from our eyes the economy of saintly intercession.

All the saints when they die, nay, all holy souls, let fall on the earth a shower of roses. But the graces they obtain for us, the spiritual and temporal favors they secure for us, are often so blended with the ordinary occurrences of our day that we fail to remark them and do not realize how much these celestial friends are doing in our behalf. It has pleased God in the case of the Little Flower to make her beneficence wonderfully visible, to astonish the world with the multitude of favors recognized and acknowledged by the recipients to have come through her intercession. At the same time, scrutinizing her life, we find therein only little deeds, hidden sufferings, victories won obscurely, but motived by great love. Is not this an evident encouragement given by God to those souls who can do nothing extraordinary except love God with a pure and simple love?

The great multitude of the faithful are prone to become discouraged in their spiritual life. They

read of the great exploits of the saints which are wont to be emphasized in their biographies, and they reflect with sorrow that such extraordinary deeds are not for them. They read and hear of the principles of the Christian life and fail to apply those consoling principles to their own lives. They overlook the heroic possibilities of the little deeds of every day. So God has sent them, in the person of the Little Flower, a living example of one who disclaims all striking achievements, who declares that she is a little soul who must remain always in the arms of Jesus, pleasing Him by little deeds. How well she pleased Him is evident from the great glory which He has given her after her death. So can we too please Him by little deeds if only they are done like hers with a great, a single-minded, a devoted and uncalculating love.

CHAPTER VIII

THE POWER OF PRAYER, INTENTION AND DESIRE

AGAIN and again in Holy Scripture our dear Lord teaches us that it is the interior disposition, the inward intention and desire of the heart, that determines merit or demerit, that forms the real substance of human action. The eyes of God, reading the conscience and the heart, determine there the true meaning of all our actions. The exterior works, the word and the deed, which appeal to the senses of men, are but the body of our actions and their raiment. The soul of every act is its intention. It is this which fixes the merit or guilt in the sight of God. The world, as we have said, is very prone to forget this truth. The world judges by what is exterior. It esteems what it sees, it worships success without considering the motives for which success was sought and won. It admires talent and riches without much regard to the inward intention by which the use of these things is governed.

The world needs, therefore, continual lessons concerning the importance of the inward intentions and desires of the heart. In the person of the Little Flower, God has furnished a very wonderful instance

of the power of an inward purpose to make the most insignificant exterior actions noble and great. We have already dwelt upon the significance of this lesson, and might indeed continue to develop it by further instances. But let us take one step more and consider that even without any exterior achievements whatever, intentions and desires are great actions in themselves and may merit a sublime and wonderful reward.

This, too, is a lesson which the world and every mortal needs to have emphasized strongly and constantly. Prone as we are to depend on our senses and on exterior appearances, we make too little of the efficacy of the will. We judge what we see, we think in terms of outward achievements, and so we fail to esteem as we should the mighty power of intention and desire, the sublime potency of the will to perform great and meritorious deeds quite independent of exterior accomplishment.

The human will is a unique and splendid faculty in this, that it is free and has therefore the power of merit or demerit. Since we can choose between good and evil, it is to our credit to choose what is good. Since we can cleave to good with free determination, this cleaving is in itself a meritorious action most pleasing to God. The will, moreover, can determine the intensity of its own choice. It can continuously increase in the fervor and depth of its own decision. Its good intentions can, by its own intrinsic power, grow stronger and stronger. Its desires may be confirmed by its own free action un-

til they become mighty flames leaping with incessant and increasing power up toward heaven.

"The kingdom of God," Our Lord has assured us, "is within you." God's glory is promoted, His love increased, the desire and intention of serving Him greatly is conceived and fostered in the heart. Just as the guilt of great crimes may be incurred merely by willing to commit them, though outward circumstances do not allow the carrying out of the wicked intention, so great deeds of holiness may be accomplished in the small cell of the heart by greatly loving, greatly desiring and intending, though it is impossible because of circumstances, to achieve all that we should like to do for God.

The lives of the saints all teach us this truth. They all were much greater in their interior intention and desire than in their outward deeds. Even the most glorious of the apostles served God more with their hearts than with their voices and their pens. St. Paul roamed tirelessly over land and sea to win souls for Christ. He was weariless and insatiable in his desire to spread the knowledge of Jesus. The mere catalogue of his sufferings profoundly touches the heart. The chronicle of his apostolic journeyings, of his perils by land and sea, of the persecutions he suffered for the Faith, of the souls, the cities and nations he won to God, astonishes the thoughtful reader of the Acts of the Apostles. Yet, when Paul of Tarsus, wearied with his many labors, laid his reverend head upon the block of the Roman execu-

tioner to shed his blood for Christ, his heart was still filled with insatiable longings to do more and yet more for Him whom he so ardently loved. The desire and intention of his soul was even greater and more pleasing to God than his apostolic labors.

So, too, when Francis Xavier traversed sea and land, baptizing hundreds of thousands, enduring unheard of hardships, teaching children, ministering to the sick, rebuking fearlessly the disorders of the great and healing the souls of the poor, the desires of his heart were still more pleasing to God than were his stupendous exterior labors. And when his ten years of intense effort were over and he lay in the wretched hut on the island of Sancian, looking with yearning eyes toward the coast of China, hungry for souls, the sublime heroism of his love and the greatness of his apostolic desire were more precious to God than all his marvelous good works.

Yet, in the case of these strenuous heroes of God, it is difficult for us to realize the merit and efficacy even of interior intentions and desires which have never come to exterior realization. Their outward works are so splendid, that they seem to have honored God by these rather than by the unfulfilled desires of their hearts. Does it not seem as though God was resolved to show us, in the person of the Little Flower, the efficacy of great wishes and intentions to please Him, even though the means of carrying them into action may be quite wanting? So He has kept His little spouse in the most obscure surround-

ings, yet given her the heart of an apostle and a martyr. He has allowed her to reveal in her Autobiography the immense desires by which she was inflamed, and then has poured down from heaven so great a rain of singular favors to show how dear to Him were these unfulfilled desires and intentions of her heart.

In the last chapter of her Autobiography, which was addressed to her eldest sister, Marie, called in religion Sister Marie of the Sacred Heart, who was her godmother, and who had evidently asked St. Theresa to leave her some souvenir of her life, the Little Flower describes the immense desires, the sublime intentions, which filled her heart. "Oh, my dear sister," she says, "you ask me to leave you a souvenir. Since our Mother permits it, it is a joy for me to converse with you who are my sister twice over, with you who have lent me your voice, promising in my name when I was too young to talk, that I wished to serve only Jesus. Dear little godmother, it is the child whom you offered to the Lord who speaks to you this evening. It is she who loves you as only a child can love its mother. In heaven alone you will know all the gratitude which overflows my heart."

Transported by this pure affection for her sister, the Little Flower wishes to communicate to her the secrets of sanctity which she has learned from Jesus. "Oh, my dear sister," she says, "you wish to hear the secrets which Jesus confides to your little daugh-

ter. He intends these secrets for you also. I know it because it is you who have taught me to treasure His divine wisdom. I shall try to stammer some words for you though I feel that it is impossible for human speech to repeat things which the heart itself can barely comprehend.

"Do not think," she continues, "that I am swimming in consolations. Ah, no! My consolation is not to have any consolation upon this earth. Without showing Himself, without making His voice heard, Jesus instructs me in secret. It is not by means of books that He teaches me, for I hardly understand them any more when I read them. Still, now and then, a word like this one which I have found this evening, at the end of a meditation passed in dryness, comes to console me. 'Behold the Master whom I give you, He will teach you everything which you ought to do, I wish to have you read in the book of life, wherein is contained the science of love.' "

Having quoted these words, which are taken from the sayings of Our Lord to St. Margaret Mary, the Little Flower continues: "The science of love! Ah, that phrase rings sweetly in the ears of my soul! I desire only that science. For its sake 'having given all my substance' like the Spouse of the Canticles 'I despise it as nothing.' I think that I have given nothing. I understand so well that it is only love which is capable of making us pleasing to our dear Lord. This love is the sole good which I desire."

She then goes on to express her conviction that complete abandonment to the divine Love and grati-

tude, not great actions, is what Christ desires, "Jesus," she says, "delights to show me the unique way which leads to this divine furnace of His love. That way is the complete abandonment of the little child, which sleeps without fear in the arms of its father. 'If anyone is very little, let him come to me,' the Holy Spirit has said by the mouth of Solomon, and this same Spirit of Love has declared again that 'for him that is little, mercy is granted'" (Wisdom vi. 7).

After some further quotations from the prophet Isaias and the Psalms, the Little Flower continues, "Oh, my dearly beloved sister! after such language there is nothing to do but to be silent and weep with thankfulness and love. *Ah, if the souls which are feeble and imperfect like mine realize what I realize, not one of them would despair of reaching the summit of love, because Jesus does not ask great actions but only abandonment and gratitude.*" We have italicized these words because they so clearly convey the teaching of the Little Flower.

She then quotes from the Psalms, where God declares that He has no need of the goats of the flocks because all the beasts of the woods are His, the cattle on the hills and the oxen. He knows all the fowls of the air. If He were hungry He would not tell us, for the world is His and the fullness thereof, but He eats not the flesh of bullocks, nor drinks the blood of goats. "Offer to God the sacrifice of praise," cries out the Psalmist, "and pay thy vows to the Most High" (Psalm xlix. 14). "Behold," con-

tinues the Little Flower, "all that Jesus asks of us! He has no need of our works, but only of our love.

"The same God who declared that He had no need to tell us if He were hungry, has not feared to beg a little water of the Samaritan woman. He was thirsty, but in saying 'Give me to drink' (JOHN iv. 7), it was the love of His poor creature that the Creator of the universe asked for. He was thirsty for love." She then repeats in other words the plaint of the Sacred Heart, which we know so well through the writings of St. Margaret Mary. "Yes," she says, "Christ is more thirsty now than ever. He finds among the disciples of the world only the ungrateful and the indifferent, and among His own disciples He has, alas, very few hearts who abandon themselves without any reserve to the tenderness of His infinite love."

She then, in answer to her sister's request, describes first the most consoling dream of her life and then her "little teaching" as her sister has called it, in asking that she should write of these two things. The dream had to do with the Venerable Mother Ann of Jesus, Founder of the Carmel in France, and it was a dream which left her full of joy and peace, for it seemed to her that this holy soul had promised her that God should soon take her from earth and had declared that He was content with her. Then she goes on to speak of the immense desires with which her Beloved had filled her heart.

"Oh, my Well-Beloved," she cries out, "that grace was only the prelude of greater graces still which

You wish to heap upon me. Allow me to recall them to You to-day and pardon me if I am foolish in wishing to relate my hopes and my desires which are well-nigh infinite. Pardon me, and heal my soul by giving it what it hopes for! To be Thy spouse, O Jesus," she goes on, "to be a Carmelite, to be through my union with You, the mother of souls, all that should suffice me. Nevertheless, I find in myself other vocations. I discover in me the vocation of a warrior, of a priest, of an apostle, of a doctor of the Church, of a martyr. I would like to accomplish all the most heroic exploits possible. I feel within me the courage of a Crusader, I would like to die on the field of battle for the defense of the Church.

"The vocation of a priest! With what love, O, Jesus, I would bear You in my hands when my voice had made You come down from heaven! With what love I would give You to souls! But, alas, even as I desire to be a priest, I admire and I envy the humility of St. Francis of Assisi and I feel the vocation also to imitate him by refusing the sublime dignity of the priesthood. How then shall I blend together these contrasting vocations? I would like to be a light to souls like the prophets and the doctors. I would like to travel throughout the earth, preaching Your name and planting Your glorious cross on heathen soil, O my Well-Beloved! But one mission would not suffice me: I would like at the same time to announce the Gospel in all parts of the world and even to the remotest isles of the ocean. I would like to be a mis-

sionary not only during some years, but I should wish to have begun at the commencement of the world and to continue even to the consummation of the ages!

"Ah, above all things I would like to be a martyr! The martyr's crown! That was the dream of my youth. The dream has increased within me in my little cell of Carmel. But here again is folly, for I do not desire only one kind of torments, but to satisfy me I should have to suffer them all. Like You, my adored Spouse, I would like to be scourged and crucified. I would like to die flayed alive like St. Bartholomew; like St. John, I would wish to be plunged into boiling oil; I yearn, like St. Ignatius of Antioch, to be ground by the teeth of beasts so as to become a bread worthy of God. With St. Agnes and St. Cecilia I yearn to offer my neck to the sword of the executioner; and like Joan of Arc I would murmur the name of Jesus upon a burning pyre.

"If my thoughts fall upon the unheard-of sufferings which will be the lot of Christians in the time of Anti-Christ, I feel my heart thrilled with desire. I wish that all these torments were in store for me. Open, O my Jesus, Your Book of Life wherein are written all the actions of all Your saints; those actions I long to have accomplished all for You! What answer will You make to all my follies? Is there on the earth a soul more small, more weak than mine? Still, because of my very feebleness, You have been pleased to grant my childish desires, and You wish to-day to grant these other desires of mine, vaster than the universe!"

It is by the intensity of her love that the Little Flower hopes to accomplish these immense ambitions, these sublime intentions and all-embracing desires. She seeks and finds her place in the heart of the Church. It is St. Paul who teaches her what is the most perfect service. "These aspirations of mine," she says, "had become a true martyrdom when I opened one day the Epistles of St. Paul, so as to seek some remedy for my torment. Chapters twelve and thirteen of the first epistle to the Corinthians drew my eyes. I read there that all cannot become, at the same time, apostles, prophets and doctors, that the Church is made up of various members and that the eye cannot be at the same time the hand.

"The answer was clear, but it did not satisfy my desires nor give me peace. 'Then, descending even into the abysses of my nothingness, I lifted myself up so high that I could reach my aim' (St. John of the Cross). Without growing discouraged I continued my reading, and this counsel consoled me. 'But be zealous for the better gifts, and I show unto you yet a more excellent way' (I Corinthians xii. 31). Then the Apostle explains how all the most perfect gifts are nothing without love, that charity is the most excellent way to go surely to God. At last I had found rest.

"Considering the mystical body of Holy Church, I recognized myself in none of the members described by St. Paul, or rather I wished to recognize myself in all of them. Charity gave me the key to my vocation. I understood that if the Church had a body

composed of different members, the most necessary, the most noble of all these organs could not be wanting there. I understood that she had *a heart* and that this heart was burning with love. I understood that love alone gave motion to her members, that if love were extinguished the apostles would no longer announce the Gospel, the martyrs would refuse to shed their blood. I comprehended that love embraces all vocations, that love is everything, that it reaches out to all times and all places because it is eternal!

"Then, in the excess of my delirious joy, I cried out, 'O Jesus, my Love, at last I have found my vocation. *My vocation is Love!* Yes, I have found my place in the bosom of the Church, and this place, O my God, You have Yourself given me. In the heart of the Church, my Mother, *I will be love.* Thus I shall be all things; thus my dream shall be realized.' "

This secret of the efficacy of love is the secret of all the saints. Each one apprehends it indeed in a personal way and makes particular application; but throughout the ages all those who have greatly pleased God have done so, not by their works, but by their love. He ever looks more to the love of the giver than to the gift of the lover. In helping us to realize this the Little Flower will have wrought a great apostolate in our souls. Alas, what a difference there is between knowing and realizing this secret of the saints!

St. Theresa goes on in her charming pages to challenge her former expression that her joy in this

discovery of the efficacy of love was a delirious joy. Instead it had brought her the profoundest peace. "Why," she says, "do I speak of my joy as a delirious one? No, this expression is not just. Rather it is peace which has become my portion, the calm and serene peace of the sailor who sees the lighthouse which guides him to port. Oh, luminous beacon of love! I know how I may come to Thee, I have found the secret of borrowing Thy fires!"

Her own imperfection and feebleness do not discourage her from her great ambition to become a holocaust of love. "I am but a weak and feeble child," she says; "nevertheless my helplessness itself gives me courage to offer myself as a victim, O Jesus, to Your love. In olden days only pure and spotless holocausts were acceptable to the strong and mighty God. To satisfy the divine Justice, there was need of perfect victims. But the law of love has taken the place of the law of fear, and love has chosen me for a holocaust, me a weak and imperfect creature! Is not such a choice worthy of love? Yes, for in order that love may be perfectly satisfied it is necessary that it should stoop even to nothingness, and it must transform that nothingness into fire.

"O my God, I know that 'love is repaid only by love' (St. John of the Cross). So I have sought, I have found the means of solacing my heart by giving You back love for love. 'Make unto you friends of the mammon of iniquity that when you shall fail they may receive you into everlasting dwellings' (Luke xvi. 9). That is, employ the riches which make

men unjust, to make for yourselves friends who will receive you into everlasting tabernacles. Behold, O Lord the counsel which You gave to Your disciples after having said to them, that 'the children of this world are wiser in their generation, than the children of light' (*Ibid.* xvi. 8).

"I am a child of light and I have understood that my desires to do all things, to embrace all vocations, were riches which might very well make me unjust; so I have employed them to gain new friends. Remembering the prayer of Eliseus to the prophet Elias, when he demanded his double spirit, I presented myself before the angels and the assembly of the saints and I said to them, 'I am the littlest of creatures. I know my misery, but I know also how much noble and generous hearts love to do good. I beseech you, then, blessed inhabitants of the celestial city, to adopt me as your child. To you alone will accrue the glory which you help me to gain. Deign to hear my prayer, obtain for me, I beseech you, the double of your love!' "

The sublime confidence and childlike audacity of this prayer must have moved the hearts of the celestial choirs. St. Theresa was well aware of the unfathomable extent of the favor which she asked. But she sought refuge in her own littleness. "Lord," she cries out, "I cannot measure the depth of my request. I should dread to find myself crushed beneath the weight of my audacious desires. My excuse is my claim to be *a child.* Children do not reflect on the meaning of their words. Still, if their father or

their mother mounted a throne and possessed immense treasures, they would not hesitate to grant the desires of the little beings whom they cherish more than themselves. To give them pleasure they will stoop even to folly, they will condescend even to weakness.

"Well, I am a child of the Holy Church. The Church is a queen because she is Your spouse, O divine King of kings. It is not riches nor glory—even the glory of heaven—that my heart desires. Glory belongs of right to my brothers the angels and the saints. My own glory shall be the reflection which shines from the brow of my Mother. What I ask for is *love.* I only know one thing, *to love You,* O Jesus. Shining deeds are denied me. I cannot teach the Gospel, cannot shed my blood. . . . What difference does it make? My brothers work in my stead, and I, *little child,* I stay close to the royal throne and *I love* You for those who are in the battle.

"But how shall I show my love, since love proves itself by actions? Well! *the little child will strew flowers* . . . . she will embalm with her perfumes the throne divine, she will sing in her silvery voice the canticle of love!" Then the Little Flower utters that praise of little things which we have already repeated. She declares that she will never allow any little sacrifice, any look, any word to escape her, that she will profit by the least actions by doing them out of love. These are the flowers she will strew before the throne of God, and the Church Triumphant, smiling, will join in her childish sport, will gather to-

gether these spiritual rose leaves and, passing them through the divine hands of Jesus to give them infinite value, will cast them down on the Church Suffering and the Church Militant, giving to the one, relief from suffering; and to the other, victory over temptation and trial.

Her own littleness gives her confidence when she reflects upon the condescension of infinite Love. "How," she cries out, "can a soul so imperfect as mine aspire to the fulness of love? What is the key to this mystery? Why do You not reserve, O my only Friend, these immense aspirations for great souls, for the eagles, who soar in the heights? Alas, I am only a poor little bird as yet unfledged. I am not an eagle. I have only an eagle's eyes and heart. . . . Yes, despite my extreme littleness, I dare gaze upon the divine Sun of Love and I burn to dart upward even to Him. I yearn to fly, I yearn to imitate the eagles, but all that I can do is to lift up my little wings. It is not in my feeble power to soar.

"What is to become of me? Shall I die of grief in seeing myself so powerless?" she inquires. Then she replies with a sublime act of confidence, "Ah, no, I shall not even grow troubled. With an audacious self-abandonment, I wish to remain there, gazing even until my death at my divine Sun. Nothing can alarm me, neither the winds nor the rain; and if great clouds come to hide the Star of Love, if I seem to myself not to believe any longer that there exists anything else than the night of this life, that will be the moment of perfect joy, the moment to press

my confidence to its uttermost bounds, bewaring to change my place, knowing that beyond the sorrowful clouds my sweet Sun still is shining.

"Oh Eternal Word, O my Saviour," she continues, after deploring that she strays sometimes from His side and that her scarcely fledged wings are bedraggled in the miserable pools of earth, "You are the Eagle whom I love and who lures me. You it is who, darting toward this land of exile, have wished to suffer and to die so as to bear away all souls and plunge them into the very heart of the Blessed Trinity, the eternal Hearth of love! You it is who, soaring toward the inaccessible light, rest hidden in our valley of tears beneath the appearance of a white host and this to nourish me with Your own substance.

"O Jesus, permit me to say that Your love goes even to folly. . . . How then in the presence of this folly can You wish that my heart should not leap up to You? How can my confidence in You have any bounds? Ah, for You, I know it well, the saints also have made themselves as fools, they have done great things because they were eagles! I am too little to accomplish great deeds and my folly is to hope that Your love will accept me as a victim. My folly is to rely on the angels and the saints so that I may fly unto You, with Your own wings, O my Eagle adored! As long as You wish, I will remain with my eyes fixed upon You, I wish to be *fascinated* by Your divine eyes, I wish to become the prey of Your divine love. I have the hope that one day You will swoop down upon me and carry

me away to the hearth of love. You will at last plunge me into that burning abyss when I become its happy victim forever."

With this canticle of love and confidence, the Little Flower brings to a close the pages of her Autobiography. There is but one passage more, which we have already translated, in which she longs to tell to all *little souls* the ineffable condescension of Jesus. She declares that if it were possible that a soul could be found more feeble than her own, He would delight to overwhelm it with favors still greater than He has vouchsafed her, if it would abandon itself with all confidence to His infinite mercy. "But," she concludes, "He who has taught me these things can also reveal them to other souls." She beseeches Him to do so, to lower His divine gaze until it falls on a great number of little souls and to choose in this world a multitude of little victims of His love.

The sequel to the life of the Little Flower makes these prayers and desires of hers the more significant and wonderful. The sayings which her sisters have preserved give witness to the extraordinary ambitions which she felt to begin after her death a career of public beneficence. "I will spend my heaven," she said, "in doing good upon earth. After my death I will let fall a shower of roses. In heaven," she declared, "God will do all I desire, because on earth I have never done my own will." Once, when one of her sisters had shown her a picture which represented Joan of Arc being comforted in prison by her Voices, she declared, "I also am comforted by an

interior voice. From above, the saints encourage me, saying, 'So long as thou art a captive in chains thou canst not fulfill thy mission, but later on, no doubt, after thy death, will come thy day of triumph.' "

As she lay on her bed of death, so we read in the French edition of her Life, she seemed to be vividly conscious of her future mission. "The veil of the future seemed to have fallen down before her and more than once she revealed to us," says the writer of this account, "secrets and prophecies already realized. 'I have never given anything but love to our dear Lord,' she said, 'He will give me back His love in return. After my death I will let fall a shower of roses.' One of the Sisters was speaking to her of the happiness of heaven. She interrupted by saying, 'It is not that which attracts me. . . '

" 'What is it, then?'

" 'Oh, it is love, to love, to be loved *and to come back on earth to make Love more loved.*'

"One evening she greeted Mother Agnes of Jesus [her sister Pauline] with an unusually serene and joyful look: 'My Mother,' said she, 'some notes from a distant concert have just floated to my ears, and I thought that soon I should hear incomparable melodies; but that hope rejoiced me only an instant; one sole thought made my heart beat with joy. *It was the thought of the love which I shall receive and of the love which I shall be able to give.*'

" 'I feel,' she continued, 'that my mission is about to commence, my mission of making others love the good God as I love Him . . . of giving my little

way to souls. *I wish to pass my heaven in doing good upon earth.* It is not impossible, because the angels watch over us from the very heart of the beatific vision. No, I shall not be able to take any rest even to the end of the world! But when the angel shall say: "Time is no more!" then I shall take repose. I shall be able to rejoice because the number of the elect will be complete.'

" 'What little way is it,' asked Mother Agnes of Jesus, 'which you wish to teach to souls?'

" 'My Mother,' she replied, 'it is the way of spiritual childhood. It is the path of confidence and of total abandonment. I wish to indicate to them the little ways which have so perfectly succeeded for me, to tell them that they need only do one single thing here below, shower upon Jesus the flowers of little sacrifices, captivate Him by little caresses! It is in this way that I have won His love and that is why I shall be so well received by Him.' "

Her sublime confidence is witnessed by another little incident related shortly after. Often the Sisters brought her roses, which she twined about her crucifix, caressing the crucifix with each petal. One day some of these roses fell to the floor. "Gather those petals up," she said, "they will help you to give pleasure to others later on. Do not lose a single one." They served indeed, the account goes on, not only to give pleasure, but to work miracles.

She seemed also, in these last moments, filled with the idea that even the details of her death were to serve as an encouragement to ordinary souls, who

could imitate her intentions, desires and prayers of love, though they were unable to copy the splendid exploits of the eagles of God. On the eve of the feast of Our Lady of Mt. Carmel, one of the novices said to her, "If you were to die to-morrow, after Communion, that would be such a beautiful death; it seems to me that if I were you, it would console me for all my sufferings." But St. Theresa replied emphatically, "Die, right after Communion! On such a great feast! No, it will never happen so. Little souls would never be able to imitate such a thing. In my little way there must be only very ordinary things. Everything that I do, little souls must be able to do."

On another occasion she had emphasized this same conviction when a Sister, in an outburst of enthusiasm, had exclaimed, "Truly, you are a saint!"

"No," replied St. Theresa, "I am not a saint, I have never done the actions of the saints, I am a very little soul whom the dear Lord has overwhelmed with graces. You will see in heaven that I speak the truth."

"But you have always been faithful to the divine graces, haven't you?"

"Yes, since the age of three years I have never refused anything to our good Lord, but still I can take no credit for it. See how this evening the setting sun gilds the tops of the trees. In the same way my soul appears to you gilded and shining because it is exposed to the rays of love. If the divine Sun

did not send me His burning beams, I should become straightway dark and shadowy."

"But we should all like to be gilded thus," said the Sister; "how can we manage it?"

"You must practise the little virtues. Sometimes it is difficult, but the good God never refuses the first grace which gives courage for self-conquest. If the soul corresponds to this, she finds herself straightway in the light. I have always," she continued, "been struck by the praise addressed to Judith, 'for thou hast done manfully and thy heart has been strengthened' (JUDITH xv. 11). First we must act with courage, then the heart is strengthened and one goes from victory to victory."

There are other sayings of the Little Flower which express the same sublime confidence in a life of beneficence beyond the tomb. So fixed was her conviction, that in her answers to remarks of her Sisters she brought in again and again allusions to the life after life which she was persuaded was to be hers. Thus, on one occasion, someone said to her, "In heaven you will be placed among the seraphim." She did not take the trouble to deny this bit of praise, but straightway it occurred to her that the seraphim are represented in Scripture as veiling themselves with their wings. "In the year that King Ozias died," says the Prophet, "I saw the Lord sitting upon a throne, high and elevated, and His train filled the temple. Upon it stood the Seraphim, the one had six wings, and the other had six wings; with two

they covered His face and with two they covered His feet, and with two they flew" (Isaias vi. 2).

Sister Theresa had understood this to mean that the Seraphim covered themselves with their wings, so at once she answered the Sister, "If I am placed among the Seraphim, I will not imitate them. At the sight of God they cover themselves with their wings; I will take good care not to hide myself with mine." So, too, on another occasion someone said to her, "You will look down upon us from heaven, will you not?" "No," straightway came the answer, "I will come down."

The Lover of mankind has declared, "Ask and it shall be given you, Seek and you shall find, Knock and it shall be opened to you" (Matthew vii. 7). The measure of what we shall receive is our own intention, desire and confident expectation. At the end of His life, He complained to His apostles that they had not asked Him enough. "Amen, amen, I say to you," He said, in His last discourse to them, "if you ask the Father anything in My Name, He will give it to you. Hitherto you have not asked anything in My Name. Ask and you shall receive; that your joy may be full" (John xvi. 23-24). There is no limit to the efficacy of prayer. Since both the power and the love of God are infinite, He will give us as much as we are prepared to receive. "For everyone that asketh, receiveth," says Our Lord; "and he that seeketh, findeth; and to him that knocketh, it shall be opened." He goes on to confirm this by an instance: "Or what man is there

among you," He says, "of whom, if his son shall ask bread, will he reach him a stone? Or if he shall ask of him a fish, will he reach him a serpent? If you then being evil, know how to give good gifts to your children: How much more will your Father who is in heaven, give good things to them that ask Him?" (MATTHEW vii, 8-12).

This Our Lord said in the Sermon on the Mount. Long afterward He repeated emphatically this promise. He had cursed the barren fig tree, which withered away, "And the disciples, seeing it, wondered, saying: How is it presently withered away?" and Jesus, answering, said to them: "Amen, I say to you, if you shall have faith, and stagger not, not only this of the fig tree shall you do, but also if you shall say to this mountain: Take up and cast thyself into the sea, it shall be done, and all things whatsoever you shall ask in prayer, believing, you shall receive."

We read and hear of these stupendous promises, limitless on the part of God, offering us whatever we ask with complete love and confidence and for His glory, and we are small of faith, limited in our desires, wavering in our expectations. The Little Flower, with the directness and simplicity of a child, took the words of Christ literally, as they are meant to be taken. Regardless of the extreme improbability, from the human point of view, that her wishes for that glorious and apostolic life after death should be realized, she expected confidently that her prayers would be answered and that she should become, after

her death, a missionary, an apostle, a doctor of the Church.

What did it matter to her if all this was extremely unlikely from the standpoint of human prudence? She had asked it of the Omnipotent and All-Loving, she had fulfilled, she was convinced, the conditions for efficacious prayer, she had pleaded from pure love of God with a sole desire of His glory, according to the inspirations of His grace, in conformity to what she believed to be His holy will. She was entirely confident that God would somehow, it did not concern her how, realize her desires, make her intentions fruitful, answer her prayers. He has done so. The extraordinary life after death of the Little Flower is one of the wonders of our time.

Whatever one may judge of individual instances, of specific miracles and favors granted through her intercession, no one can deny the world-wide reverence, the amazing confidence, the authentic gratitude of hundreds and thousands of souls in every condition of life in every country of the world. What has produced this extraordinary outburst of devotion? The simple and the wise, the great and the little, unite in their homage to the Little Flower. She is made the patroness of dioceses, of good works, of charitable enterprises, of religious societies. She is thanked and praised in every part of the world for signal favors acknowledged to be due to her intercession. Grave cardinals, aged bishops, young priests, in the first blush of their apostolic fervor, choose her for their special patroness. Is there any

natural cause which can explain so universal, sudden and enthusiastic a devotion?

The Autobiography in its various translations, the innumerable leaflets and portraits of the Little Flower, have no doubt aided to excite this world-wide reverence. There is a charm, a bright appeal in the Autobiography which touches the heart. The leaflets too, have found their way into many hands. But giving the utmost credit to these sources of devotion, they can hardly explain a gratitude so extraordinary, a personal enthusiasm so intense on the part of so many hundreds of thousands. Gratitude and enthusiasm come from personal experience and individual zeal.

It would be difficult to find another parallel in history of the sudden fame of the Little Flower. Many another beautiful soul has bloomed in the cloister, has spread the fragrance of a perfect life in that still and holy air, has left beautiful writings, full of sweetness and appeal, then has died and been hailed a saint by the devotion of the faithful and by the judgment of the Church. But it has usually taken many decades, sometimes centuries, for the first steps toward canonization to be completed. So strong has the tide of popular devotion flowed in the case of the Little Flower, that it has swept away the delays which usually and prudently intervene between the death of a holy person and the solemn acts of beatification and canonization. In the case of her great mother in religion, St. Theresa of Avila, who died on the 4th of October, 1582, at the age of 67, it was

thirty-two years after her saintly death that she was beatified, and eight years more until she was canonized on the 15th of October, 1622. Even this was an extraordinarily rapid canonization. But the Little Flower, who was born on January 2, 1873 and died on September 30, 1897, at the age of twenty-four, was beatified twenty-six years after she died, and received the crowning glory of canonization, only two years afterward, when she would have been but fifty-two years of age if she had lived.

She has obtained precisely what she prayed for, what she intended and desired. Having surrendered, by following her vocation, all human hope and prospect of an apostolic life on earth, she comes forth from the tomb to the full career of an apostolate which seems destined to be measured, not by years, but by centuries. During life she deliberately hid herself away, for the love of God, from all exterior labors. She undertook instead, in obedience to God's will, the most fruitful, the most sublime and effective of apostolates, that of confiding, loving, persevering and magnanimous prayer. So little did those about her realize the extraordinary career that was to be hers after death that one of the lay Sisters is said to have compassionated the Mother Superior because, being obliged by the custom of the Carmelites to write the life of each deceased member and send it abroad for the edification of the other convents, she would have difficulty in finding anything to say, so thought the Sister, about St. Theresa!

Yet it is this hidden flower whose sweetness now fills the earth! It is this maiden of few years whose glory, proclaimed by the Universal Church, shines to the uttermost islands of the ocean. It was said by the gentle Saviour, of Mary Magdalen of old, that much was forgiven her because she had loved much. May we not say of the Little Flower that much has been given her because she has loved much, has prayed much, has desired much, has intended great things for God's glory? She asked and she has received, she sought and she has found, she knocked and it was opened unto her. In her, shine forth the efficacy of prayer, of intention, of desire, to employ the very Omnipotence of God.

CHAPTER IX

THE VOCATION OF THE LITTLE FLOWER

THE vocation of the contemplative nun is a mystery and a puzzle to those outside the Church. Even some Catholics have difficulty in comprehending the usefulness to society in general of those devoted souls who leave all exterior occupations, quit the ways of active life, and in the silence of the cloister devote themselves to prayer and intercession for the souls of others and for the needs of the Church and the world.

The activities of the religious women who teach, who nurse in hospitals, who care for children in orphanages, who are the mainstay of charitable enterprises and the devoted support of Catholic institutions, are quite intelligible even to the unbeliever. The fruit of their work is evident, the blessings which flow from their devoted zeal are obvious. But to go into a convent of contemplatives, to spend one's time in prayer, to withdraw from the busy, bustling world to walk with God, this seems to many an incomprehensible proceeding; nay, a piece of folly which they cannot understand.

Especially when someone who is gifted and attrac-

tive enters upon such a life, the marvel grows. Those talents which might have shone in society and drawn many to the practise of virtue, through good example, are now swallowed up in the monastery. Only a small circle of Sisters will profit by that good example, enjoy the influence of those gifts; and they least need that influence because they themselves have fled from the world and consecrated themselves to God. That attractive personality, that charming disposition, the indefinable and magnetic power of drawing hearts and conciliating friendships must now be quite lost to the world. Is it not wrong thus to leave those who most need one's consolation and encouragement and to bury oneself in silence and loneliness?

They who have no talents, whose characters are unattractive, who can readily be spared from active life, they may have some excuse, so the world thinks, for becoming contemplatives. But how can those be justified who could have been apostles in the world and who now have quite cut themselves off from being of any service to anyone?

So the world reasons and judges. It has no notion of the sublime power of prayer, of the efficacy of self-sacrifice. It does not realize that those who give up the world, who devote themselves entirely to Christ, who spend their lives in converse with Him, may be greater benefactors of mankind, may do a more effective work in the world, than if they spent their days in the busiest and most active apostolate among men.

Paul plants and Apollo waters, but it is God that giveth the increase (1 CORINTHIANS iii. 6). The contemplative, pleading with God, day in and day out, for graces, pardon and favors upon men, enlists that help of God which is worth more than all human endeavors.

The courtier of a great king, who lives intimately with his master, appearing before him every day and speaking with him constantly, can do more to promote an enterprise than those who toil for its success out in the thronging world. For the courtier can enlist the favor of the king and gain his sovereign power to help the enterprise. In a similar way the contemplative, dealing familiarly with God, constantly employing the incalculable power of prayer, can do more to promote the interests of mankind, to help the state, to further good enterprises, than those who are in the busy world. They have to depend in great measure on human means, which are uncertain and disappointing. The contemplative is of the court of God, constantly in His presence, able to enlist the endless power of God, which is ready at the pleading of earnest and continued prayer.

Yet, it is difficult for us to realize the truth of these things. For the most part, the immense efficacy of prayer works obscurely and can be discerned only by faith. The Catholic girl who enters a convent of contemplatives however talented, attractive, popular she may be, disappears from the sight and knowledge of the world. Her prayers are indeed more effica-

cious than her work would have been, but no one living can pick out from the warp and woof of human affairs the golden threads of divine favor which are the result of those prayers. Only the eye of God can trace her benign influence in the world of men. She herself, in her life of fidelity and self-sacrifice, has only faith to assure her that she is working effectively for the salvation of souls and the happiness of mankind.

But in the case of the Little Flower it has pleased God to lay open to us, so to say, the heavenly anatomy of a contemplative vocation. In the utterances of her Autobiography, taken in conjunction with what her sisters say of her life, and with her wonderful life after death, now a matter of such general knowledge and admiration, we can trace out the influence of the Little Flower and gain a new idea of the efficacy of the religious life in general and of the contemplative vocation in particular.

In an age when appreciation of the supernatural is diminishing outside the Catholic Church, when the religious vocation is too little appreciated and understood, the career of the Little Flower seems meant by God to teach yet again the preciousness of that complete immolation which the three vows of poverty, chastity and obedience imply; and the beauty of the contemplative life, wherein the soul completely abandons the world so as perfectly to converse with God in prayer.

It was the desire of souls, the apostolic zeal which

she learned from the Heart of Christ, that made the Little Flower long to enter Carmel so as to devote herself there in constant prayer and self-sacrifice for the salvation of men. This she herself assures us in her Autobiography. She has just described a little victory, but a very significant one, which she had gained over the excessive sensitiveness and nervous excitability which long had distressed her and her family.

"On that night of grace," she says, "commenced the third period of my life, the most beautiful of all, the most filled with the graces of Heaven. In an instant, the work which I had not been able to do in many years, Jesus accomplished, satisfied with my good will. Like the apostles I could say, 'Master we have labored all the night and have taken nothing' (Luke v. 5). More merciful still to me than He had been to them, Jesus Himself took the net, cast it out, and drew it back full of fishes. He made of me *a fisher of souls.* Charity entered into my heart and with it the need of always forgetting myself, and from that time I was happy.

"One Sunday," she goes on, "as I shut my book at the end of Mass, a photograph representing Our Lord on the cross slipped out a little bit from the pages so that I could only see one of His divine hands, pierced and bleeding. I experienced at that moment a new and ineffable feeling. My heart was torn with grief at the sight of that precious blood which fell to earth without anyone's hastening to

THE CHURCH OF ST. JACQUES, LISIEUX

(Photograph by the Author)

treasure it up; and and I resolved to remain continually in spirit at the foot of the cross so as to receive the divine dew of salvation and to pour it forth again upon souls.

"From that day, the cry of Jesus dying, 'I thirst,' rang at every instant in my heart and enkindled there a burning zeal which I had never known before. I wished to give my Well-Beloved to drink, I felt myself devoured by the thirst for souls, and I wished at any cost to snatch sinners from the everlasting flames."

Other sayings enable us to follow the development of her vocation. At the same time she experienced these stirrings of the love of God and of zeal for souls, that her intelligence began to crave for learning.

"Freed from its scruples," she says, "and its excessive sensibility, my mind began to develop. I had always loved what is great and beautiful. At this epoch of my life, I was seized with an extreme desire for knowledge. Not satisfied with the lessons of my teacher, I devoted myself, alone, to special studies and in this way I learned more in a few months than I had done during all my previous years of study. Ah, was not this zeal vanity and vexation of spirit? With my ardent nature, this was the most dangerous moment of my life."

The strife between the love of God and human enthusiasms is to be found in the history of all vocations. The Little Flower found in good reading the

means of nourishing her inward life. "For a long time," she says, "I sustained my spiritual life with that most pure flour contained in the *Imitation of Christ.* It was the only book which did me good, for I had not yet discovered the treasures hidden in the Holy Gospels. That little book never left me. My family were very much amused at this and often my aunt, opening the book at hazard, would make me repeat by heart the chapter she had happened on.

"When I was fourteen years of age" she goes on, "our dear Lord found it necessary to join to my desire of knowledge 'that most pure flour, honey and oil in abundance.' This honey and this oil, He made me taste in the conferences of M. L'Abbé Arminjon on 'The End of the Present World and the Mysteries of the Future Life.'

"The reading of this book plunged my soul in a happiness not of this earth. I had a foretaste of what God has reserved for those who love Him; and, seeing that these eternal rewards are so far in excess of the slight sacrifices of this life, I wished to love, to love Jesus passionately, to give Him a thousand marks of tenderness while I was still able to do so."

At the same time the zeal for souls, the desire to co-operate with God in the salvation of mankind, constantly increased in the heart of the Little Flower. To confirm her in her good desires, she received from Our Lord what was to her a touching proof of the power of prayer to save the souls of men. "In order to stir up my zeal," she says, "our good Master

showed me quite soon that my desires were agreeable to Him. I heard people speaking of a notorious criminal named Pranzini, who had been condemned to death for some shocking murders, and who was so impenitent that people feared he would be lost eternally. I wished to prevent this last and irremediable misfortune. In order to do so, I used all the spiritual means imaginable; and knowing that of myself I could do nothing, I offered the infinite merits of Our Lord and the treasures of Holy Church for his ransom.

"Need I say that I felt in the depths of my heart the certainty that I should be heard? But so as to give myself more courage to continue to strive for the conquest of souls, I offered up this prayer in all simplicity. 'My God, I am quite sure that You will pardon this unhappy Pranzini; I would believe it even though he did not go to confession nor give any mark of contrition, because I have so much confidence in Your infinite mercy. But this is my first sinner, and therefore I beg of You only one sign of repentence, merely to console me.'

"My prayer was heard to the letter! My father never let us read the newspapers, still I thought it would not be disobeying him to look at the passages which concerned Pranzini. The day after his execution I hastily opened the newspaper *La Croix* and what did I see? . . . Ah, my tears betrayed my emotion and I was obliged to run away. Pranzini had mounted the scaffold without going to confession or receiving absolution. Already the executioners were

dragging him toward the fatal block when, moved all at once by a sudden inspiration, he turned about, seized a crucifix which the priest was presenting to him, and kissed three times the holy wounds. . . .

"I had, then, obtained the sign I had asked for, and this sign was a very sweet one. Was it not before the wounds of Jesus, when I saw His divine blood flowing, that the thirst for souls had penetrated my heart? I wished to give souls this immaculate blood to drink, so as to cleanse them of their stains, and the lips 'of my first-born' had been pressed on the divine wounds! What an ineffable answer! Ah! after that unique grace my desire to save souls increased every day. I seemed to hear Jesus saying to me, in a whisper, as He had to the Samaritan, *'Give Me to drink!'* It was a true exchange of love. I poured forth upon the souls the blood of Jesus, I offered to Jesus these same souls refreshed with the dew of Calvary. In this way, I thought to quench His thirst; but the more I gave Him to drink, the more the thirst of my poor soul increased, and I received this ardent thirst as the most delicious reward."

Thus her apostolic vocation increased day by day in the soul of the Little Flower. She made much of these interior favors, remembered them vividly and wrote them down in her Autobiography. But her vocation has much in common with all vocations. There is always the exterior ordering of events so that the soul may find itself drawn sweetly to the service of God, there is always the supplying by

Divine Providence of the natural gifts and opportunities required to enter religion. Above all, the inward grace of God always sweetly illumines the mind and moves the heart. Thus, in the secret of the soul, are heard those gentle words of the Saviour "Follow Me," which have led so many hundreds of thousands to quit the world, to sacrifice all they held dear, to become fools for Christ that they might practise, in communion with Him, the heroic folly of the cross.

The interior guidance which the Little Flower received was, she declares, clear and sufficient even in those days. She was little more than fourteen years old, but her intelligence and will were developed beyond her years. "At that time," she says, "I dared not speak of my inner dispositions. The way in which I walked was so direct, so luminous, that I felt the need of no other guide but Jesus. I compared directors of souls to faithful mirrors which reflect Our Lord; and I thought that for me our dear Lord did not employ any intermediary, but acted directly.

"When a gardener," she continues, "takes special care of a fruit which he wishes to make to ripen before the season, he never does so that he may leave it hanging on the tree. His purpose is to serve it on a richly garnished table. With a similar intention, Jesus lavished His graces on His Little Flower. He wished to make His mercy shine forth in me, He who cried, in a transport of joy, during the days of His mortal life, 'I confess to Thee, O

Father, Lord of heaven and earth, because Thou hast hidden these things from the wise and prudent and hast revealed them to little ones!' (LUKE x. 21). Because I was little and weak He leaned low toward me and taught me sweetly the secrets of His love."

Many difficulties and discouragements were to beset her path, however, before she arrived at the goal of her wishes and was received into Carmel. To begin with, she was not yet fifteen years of age, and even her own sisters were not all convinced that she was old enough to enter the convent. "I only found one soul to encourage me in my vocation," she says; "it was my dear Pauline. My heart found in her bosom a faithful echo; and without her, I should certainly not have arrived at the blessed harbor which had received her five years before. Yes, for five years I had been separated from you, my dearly beloved Mother in religion; I believed that I had lost you, but in the time of trial it was your hand which pointed out to me the route to follow.

"I had need of this consolation, for my visits to the parlor of Carmel had become more and more trying to me. I could not speak of my wish to enter Carmel without feeling myself discouraged. Marie, feeling that I was too young, did everything in her power to hinder my project. From the beginning I found only obstacles. On the other hand, I did not dare say anything to Céline; and this silence which I had to keep, made me suffer much, because it was so hard for me to hide anything from her.

"Very soon, however, this dear sister learned of

my determination and, far from trying to turn me away from it, she accepted the sacrifice with an admirable courage. Because she wanted to be a Religious herself, it would have been natural for her to have gone first; but, as in other days the martyrs joyfully embraced their brothers, chosen the first to combat in the arena, so she allowed me to depart, taking the same share in my trials as if there were question of her own vocation."

But her great anxiety was how best to convey the news to her father. He had already given up his two eldest daughters to Carmel, and that very year he had been attacked by the paralysis which was to cause him so much suffering and in the end occasion his death.

"Ah," says St. Theresa, "what inward struggles I suffered before speaking to him! Still, it was necessary to decide: I was fourteen and a half years old and only six months separated me from the beautiful feast of Christmas. I had resolved to enter Carmel at the same hour that, in the preceding year, I had received my grace of conversion." It was on Christmas that the Little Flower had overcome the childish sensitiveness and scruples which had so much vexed her and pained her family during the preceding year. On the feast of Pentecost she received from her father the desired permission.

"To make my great disclosure," she says, "I chose the feast of Pentecost. All that day I kept asking light from the Holy Spirit, begging the apostles to pray for me, and to inspire me with the words that

I ought to say. Was it not they, indeed, who were the very ones to help the timid child whom God destined to become the apostle of apostles by prayer and sacrifice?"

She gives a touching account of the interview with her father: "That afternoon," she says, "when we came back from Vespers, I found the opportunity I wanted. Papa was seated in the garden, and there, with folded hands, he contemplated the marvels of nature. The setting sun gilded with its parting fires the tops of the great trees, and the little birds were twittering their evening prayer.

"His beautiful countenance wore a celestial expression. I could feel that peace inundated his heart. Without saying a single word, I went and sat down at his side, my eyes already moist with tears. He looked at me with an indescriable tenderness, pressed my head to his heart and said to me, 'What ails you, my little queen? Tell it all to me . . . ' Then, rising up as though to conceal his own emotion, he walked slowly along keeping me pressed to his heart. In the midst of my tears I spoke of Carmel, of my desire to enter soon. Then he himself wept, still he did not say a word to me which could turn me from my vocation. He only called my attention to the fact that I was still very young to take so grave a decision. And as I insisted, pleading my cause well, my incomparable father with his upright and generous nature was soon convinced. We continued our walk a long time; my heart was consoled, Papa no longer shed tears.

He spoke to me like a saint. Approaching a low wall he showed me some little white flowers like miniature lilies, and taking one of these flowers he gave it to me and explained with what care the Lord had made it spring up and had kept it even to that day.

"I thought that I was listening to my own story, so striking was the resemblance between the little flower and the little Theresa. I received that flower as a relic, and I saw that, wishing to pluck it, Papa had pulled out all its roots without breaking them. It seemed destined then to live again in another and more fertile earth. My dear father had just done the same thing for me, in allowing me to leave, for the Mountain of Carmel, the sweet valley which had witnessed the first years of my life.

"I fastened my little white flower to an image of Our Lady of Victory. The Holy Virgin smiled upon it, and the little Jesus seemed to hold it in His hand. It is there still, but the stalk is broken close to the root. Our dear Lord wishes to let me know by this, no doubt, that He will will soon break all the ties of His Little Flower and will not leave her to wither on this earth. . . . "

It was then that, having obtained the consent of her father, the Little Flower experienced the opposition of her uncle. He declared that it was against all human prudence to allow a child of fifteen to enter so austere an Order, and that it would be a crime against religion to do such a thing, but as we have already described, he soon yielded, and again the

Little Flower thought she was nearing her desired goal. Alas, she soon heard from her sister Pauline, that the priest who was Superior at the Carmel had declared that she might not enter there until she was twenty-one years of age.

"No one had thought of this opposition, the most serious, the most insuperable of all. Still, without losing courage, I went myself with my father to tell the Superior of my desires. He received me very coldly, and nothing could change his attitude. We left finally, after he had said a very determined 'No.' 'Still,' he added, 'I am only the delegate of the Bishop; if he allows this entrance, I shall have nothing more to say.'"

Her father then offered to take her to Bayeux to see the Bishop. It was a trial indeed to little Theresa. "For the first time in my life," she says, "I had to make a visit without being accompanied by my sister, and this visit was to a bishop. I who had never needed to speak except to answer questions which were asked me, now had to explain and develop the reasons which made me ask to enter Carmel, so as to give proof of the solidity of my vocation."

St. Theresa gives an amusing account of this interview. The great room made her feel like a little ant. She wondered what she was going to say to the Bishop. She caught sight of him in the distance walking with two priests, and at last he came into the room where Theresa and her father were waiting. The Vicar General made her mount an immense

chair, "a monumental one," she says, "where four like myself could have been accommodated," then she had to tell the reason of her visit. The Bishop asked whether she had wanted for a long time to enter Carmel. "Oh, yes, Monsignor," she said, "a very long time."

"Come, come now," said the Vicar General, laughing, "at all events it could not be as much as fifteen years!"

"That is true," said Theresa, "but there are not many years to take off, because I have wished to give myself to the dear Lord since I was three years old." Then she continues, "the Bishop, to be agreeable to Papa, tried to make me understand that I ought to stay some time still with him. What was not the surprise and the edification of the Bishop to see my father take my part, adding, with a manner full of courtesy, that we were going to Rome for the diocesan pilgrimage and that I was then going to speak to the Holy Father if I did not obtain the desired permission."

The Bishop, however, would make no decision without an interview with the Superior of Carmel, so they took leave of the Bishop, but not before the little Theresa had heard her father relating to him how that morning, in order to appear older than she was, she had put up her hair after the manner of a grown person. "I should have preferred," she says, "I confess it, that this revelation had not been made." In fact, thereafter, whenever the Bishop spoke of his little daughter Theresa, he never omitted

to relate the story of the way in which she put up her hair to make him think her older.

Everyone who has read the Autobiography remembers the touching story of the interview of the Little Flower with Pope Leo XIII when the pilgrimage to Rome became a reality. "Six days," she says, "were passed in contemplating the principal marvels of Rome. On the seventh, I saw the greatest of them all, Leo XIII. I longed for and dreaded that day at the same time. On it depended my vocation, for I had received no answer from the Bishop, and the permission of the Holy Father had become my only plank of rescue. But to obtain this permission, I had to ask it, I had to *dare to speak to the Pope,* before many cardinals, archbishops and bishops. This thought alone made me tremble.

"It was the morning of the 20th of November when we entered the Vatican and were admitted to the chapel of the Sovereign Pontiff. At eight o'clock we assisted at his Mass, and during the Holy Sacrifice he showed us by his ardent piety, worthy of the Vicar of Jesus Christ, that he was truly a Holy Father."

After the Mass and the Pope's thanksgiving, the audience commenced. "Leo XIII," she says, "was seated on an elevated throne, clad simply in a white cassock and a cape of the same color. About him were grouped the prelates and other great ecclesiastical dignitaries. Following the ceremonial, each pilgrim genuflected in turn, kissing first the foot and then the hand of the august Pontiff and receiving

his blessing. Then two of the noble guards gave a signal to the pilgrim to rise and pass into another room and give place to those who followed. No one said a word, but I was thoroughly resolved to speak, when all of a sudden the Abbé Révérony, who was at the right of His Holiness, informed us in a loud voice that he absolutely forbade anyone to speak to the Holy Father.

"I turned to Céline, questioning her with a look. My heart was beating as though it would break. 'Speak!' she said to me. An instant after, I was at the knees of the Pope. When I had kissed his foot he presented me his hand. Then, lifting toward him my eyes full of tears, I besought him in these words, 'Most Holy Father, I have a great favor to ask of you.' At once he lowered his head toward me, his face almost touching mine, and one would have said that his dark, deep eyes wished to penetrate to my inmost soul. 'Most Holy Father,' I repeated, 'in honor of your jubilee, allow me to enter into Carmel at the age of fifteen.' Astonished and displeased, the Vicar General of Bayeux quickly said, 'Holy Father, this is a child who desires to become a Carmelite, but the Superiors have the matter under examination at the present time.'

" 'Very well, my child,' His Holiness said to me, 'do what the Superiors decide.'

"Clasping my hands and resting them on his knees I tried a final effort. 'Oh, Holy Father, if you would say "yes" everyone else would agree.' He looked at me fixedly and uttered these words in a piercing

tone, dwelling on each syllable. 'Well, well! you will enter if the dear Lord wishes it.' I was going to say something more when two of the noble guards signed to me to get up. Seeing that that was not enough, they took me by the arm and Abbé Révérony helped them to lift me up, for I was still leaning with my hands folded and resting on the knees of the Pope. At the moment when I was thus raised up, the good Holy Father gently placed his hand to my lips, then, lifting it up to bless me, he followed me for a long time with his eyes."

But at last the perseverance of the Little Flower accomplished what she desired. She was admitted to the Carmel and began her nine years of prayer and suffering which have so richly blessed the world with her shower of roses. Experienced directors of souls will recognize the traits of many vocations in this simple narrative. The difficulties of the Little Flower to obtain leave to enter Carmel at so early an age are indeed unusual, for few vocations develop so soon as did hers, but for the rest her experience is that of many hundreds of thousands of Catholic girls who, having decided to enter the religious life, have had to overcome difficulties and to endure sufferings both from within and without them.

But in the case of the Little Flower God has chosen to reveal, by the favors He has granted to her, how much He was pleased by her sacrifice, how powerful her prayers have been, according to her own desires, to win souls to God. In no other conceivable way could she have accomplished so much for God and

for her neighbor as by following out her contemplative vocation. This was the service which God asked of her, and in rendering it to Him she has wonderfully benefited many thousands of souls. Her aspirations and desires, let us repeat once more, were those of an apostle. Yet her vocation was to labor for the salvation of souls, not by preaching or writing, not by the teaching of children, nor the management of institutions, of which indeed she might have been splendidly capable, but by sacrifice, love, great desires and great prayers.

This is, again, a lesson which the world of to-day sorely needs to learn. By being united with God, by fulfilling the vocation given by God, by doing the work which God through His providence offers, the individual man or woman, in whatever state of life, can accomplish great and noble things. God's providence arranges all things with a purpose. Anyone can discern his or her vocation by considering the circumstances where God has put him, the gifts He has given, and the interior graces which He has conferred. Whoever follows the guidance of these indications of Providence will discover his true calling.

The most perfect life, the most admirable in itself and most pleasing to God is the life of the Religious. The three vows of poverty, chastity and obedience consecrate the whole being to God. In choosing this life the Little Flower chose the most perfect way of serving God. From that wise choice flowered forth all the personal holiness, all the immense capac-

ity to serve and help others which we discern in her charming and admirable career. How many a one among the young men and young women of her day received a similar invitation, heard the gentle words of Christ, "Follow Me," and turned away, refusing to make so great a sacrifice. They would not give up the many opportunities which the world seemed to offer them. They would not bury themselves in the obscurity of the religious life, away from the pleasant, interesting, appealing world. They dreamed, perhaps, of happy and brilliant careers in the world. It may be they even deceived themselves into thinking that it was a finer zeal to remain in the world and work there for God than to embrace the religious life. Perhaps someone told them, "We need good young men and young women in the world. You can do so much more by remaining where you are than by entering religion."

If they yielded to these persuasions or to the dictates of their own self-will and self-interest, and refused to follow their vocation, how do they judge now, when maturity and experience have showed them the real nature of the world and have made them aware of the disillusionments of life? If they had followed their vocation, and been faithful to it, they would have been, at the present time, companions of the Little Flower, either in her fruitful prayers and labors for the salvation of souls, or else in her triumphant life after life, when she lets fall from heaven so fragrant and generous a shower of roses.

And if anyone should object that the experience of the Little Flower is altogether exceptional, that Religious for the most part have no such glorious career, that when they die nothing more is heard of them, and their influence is negligible in the world, we need only answer that faith teaches us quite otherwise. We know that every prayer uttered by faithful Religious is answered, that their every work and sacrifice brings blessings upon souls. We know that however obscure they may seem in the eyes of men, the sight of God singles them out with loving favor. All else being equal, what place is there on earth in which men and women can do more for the glory of God and the good of souls than in the religious life?

It is this which God wishes once again to teach us by the example of the Little Flower. He has caused the light of His favor to shine upon her and has lifted the veil which would otherwise have concealed the effects of her intercession. But He means us to understand from her example that every life lived in His service is fruitful of immense good to souls. Every worthy Religious, everyone indeed who does the will of God and follows God's calling, whether in the cloister or in the world, is able after death to let fall from heaven, though our eyes may not perceive it, a fragrant shower of roses.

CHAPTER X

ABANDONMENT TO THE WILL OF GOD

IN A preceding chapter, that on the Power of Prayer, we have repeated a saying of the Little Flower to one of her sisters. "Since the age of three years, I have never refused the good Lord anything." Made as it was during the last moments of her life, this frank and simple statement strikes as it were the key-note of the life of the Little Flower and gives us the secret of her sanctity. From the time when her childish heart and mind first awakened under the influence of divine grace, she had faithfully abandoned herself to the leading of the Holy Spirit. She had made God's will her own will, and conformed her plans and desires to the desires and plans of her divine Lover.

This abandonment to the will of God always means a great victory in the human soul over selfishness and self-seeking and all the ill-ordered instincts and inclinations of our human nature. God's will is very often found to be quite different from our own. The plans we make, the desires we entertain, the prospects which invite and allure us, may not be at all what God designs for us. To establish our own

will first and cleave to it, is often to go contrary to the will of God.

Yet God is all-wise, and we are very foolish. God sees all things as they are, and we are so often deluded and led astray by our own passions and imagination. God acts only for our best interests, the interests of our soul and for His own greater glory. We are frequently inclined to do what pleases us at the moment, without reference to our eternal interests or to the glory of God.

The lesson of conformity to God's holy will and of abandonment to the leadings of God's grace is one which the world of to-day needs very sorely to learn. This is a self-sufficient, self-confident, material-minded age, and even the followers of Christ are likely to be misled and influenced for evil by the spirit of the times. One of the most shocking crimes of modern days is the deliberate effort of so many men and women to get along without God.

Great numbers of the citizens of the civilized nations of to-day deliberately and frankly repudiate the kingship of God in the world and claim their independence of any divine Master. They wish to govern their own destinies as they choose. They seek to establish upon earth, not the kingdom of God, but the kingdom of material prosperity. They look to materialistic evolution as their sole creator or, if they do admit any divine principle in the world, they seek refuge in a pantheism which denies the existence of a personal God whom all are bound to love, to honor and obey, to serve and to adore. Thus

they build up a system whereby they imagine themselves and all other things to be part of God. They declare that God is an impersonal and vague abstraction, instead of adoring Him as He is, the personal Creator and Master of the universe.

But even good Catholics, who sincerely wish to serve God, realize too little the beauty and the necessity of abandonment to God's holy will. They are not rebels from God's supreme dominion as are the unfortunate wretches whom we have described above. They love, adore and serve the one true God, the Father who has created us, the Son who has redeemed us, and the Holy Spirit who has sanctified us and dwells within our hearts.

But at the same time there are too many, even among Catholics, who, though firmly believing all the truths of faith, do not abandon themselves to the will of God, but are constantly striving to gain their own purposes, to accomplish their own will, even where it is contrary to, or different from, the will of God. They do not first seek to find the will of God and then accomplish it. Rather they strive first to find out what they themselves wish and determine their own plans and purposes, and then they try to make God come their way, so to speak, and give them what they desire.

God's will is announced to us especially in three ways. We learn it first from the ordinary events and circumstances of our lives, because these are ruled by God's providence and are either sent or permitted by His divine goodness. Second, we learn

God's will by the directions of those who have from Him authority over us. All rightly constituted superiors, whether secular or religious, speak to us in the name of God. Finally, we learn God's will from the inspirations of His divine grace. He continually enlightens our mind and strengthens our will by His holy inspirations, letting us see what is holy and good in His sight and moving our hearts to embrace it. In this way the light and strength we receive from God are continually impelling us toward this or that good action, toward the avoidance of evil and the practise of virtue, toward the correction of our faults, and the doing of good works.

Abandonment to the will of God means, therefore, to seek and acknowledge God's will in all the events of our daily life, to wish what God wishes, to be content with what He sends, to desire what He desires. It means to be obedient and docile to everyone who has a right to command us in God's name, whether the persons themselves who have authority over us are wise or unwise, good or evil. It means, finally, to be sensitive and docile to the inspirations of God's grace, to be guided by the light we receive in our mind, the strength we find in our will to do what is holy and to avoid what is evil.

Our Lord Jesus Christ gave us a perfect example of this holy abandonment to the will of God. Again and again He tells us that He does not His own will but the will of His Father, who sent Him. "In the head of the book it is written of Me," the Prophet declared of Him, "that I have come to do Thy will,

O my God." In obedience to that holy will, He fulfilled all the holy prophecies that had been made concerning Him. He took with meek and gentle love every event of His life as His Father's providence had arranged it for Him.

Humanly speaking, His life was most obscure and wretched in the eyes of the world. He was born in a stable, while even the children of the most miserable classes of mankind are usually born at least in a human dwelling. He lived by the rudest labor, making plows and yokes for oxen, as St. Justin tells us. He took, according to the will of His Father, poor ignorant men to be His apostles; and though He sighed at their dulness and hardness of heart, He never lost patience with them.

He bore all the weariness, the disappointments, the insults, the persecutions, the labors, the sufferings of mind and heart which came to Him day by day and hour by hour, according to His Father's will. Finally, He meekly endured the dreadful agony in the Garden, the terrors of His passion, the ignominy of the cross; and He who had claimed to be and who truly is the Son of God, died an outcast and a malefactor, the greatest failure, apparently, in all the history of the world!

Every one of us is called upon to imitate in some degree the abandonment of Christ to the will of His heavenly Father. But He was no less obedient to all who had any authority from God. He obeyed even the Scribes and Pharisees. He said to His disciples, "Upon the chair of Moses, have sitten the Scribes

and the Pharisees. All things whatsoever they shall say to you, therefore, observe and do; but according to their works, do ye not" (MATTHEW xxiii. 2). He was obedient even to His executioners when they bade Him take up His cross, obedient to them when they ordered him to stretch His weary limbs upon that cruel gibbet so that they might be nailed to the wood of sacrifice. He was obedient even to the end and He cried out on the cross, "It is consummated!" to show to the whole universe that He had fulfilled perfectly and in all things the will of His Father in heaven.

He was perfectly docile also to the inspirations of God's grace. He and His blessed Mother are the two of all our human kind who have perfectly accomplished God's will and perfectly fulfilled the ideal which God has of them. Both full of grace, both fully corresponding with every movement of grace, Jesus and Mary are the models of perfect abandonment to the will of God. In Him we see the absolute perfection of this abandonment, given us by One, who, though He was truly God, was also most truly the Son of Man. In her we see how perfectly a being like ourselves can imitate the God-Made-Man in His abandonment to the will of His heavenly Father.

The Little Flower, from her earliest years, learned well, by the inspiration and the help of God's mighty grace, this lesson of abandonment. As we read her simple and touching story, we can see how often she gave up her own will, her own inclinations and de-

sires to do the will of God. For her, God's providence was not a mere abstraction, a beautiful theory. She saw the hand of God in every least occurrence of her life and she was constantly eager to be resigned to what God sent, to wish what God willed, to be grateful for all that came to her, whether joy or sorrow, because it came from the hand of God, and with a sweet fragrance of God's touch upon it.

The very simplest events of her life, happenings which a less vivid faith would ascribe merely to chance, are to her constant indications of God's goodness, of His protection, of the overruling kindness of His love. When she has described her early traits of character, her determination and self-love she sweetly declares, in a passage which we have quoted before, "with such a nature I am quite aware that if I had been brought up by parents without virtue, I should have become very wicked, and perhaps I might even have lost my soul. But Jesus watched over His little spouse, He made all her faults turn to her advantage and these, corrected in good time, helped her to increase in perfection."

Thus, even in the faults which Our Lord had allowed her to experience in her character, she recognized the will of God and His overruling providence which was able to make of these faults a means to help her toward holiness. How many there are who fret at their own defects and shortcomings, not realizing that it is the will of God that they should struggle all their lives against these evil inclinations and thus through that struggle arrive at holiness.

They have not learnt the lesson of self-abandonment, nor even grasped the wisdom of the poet's song:

> "I hold it true of him who sings,
> On one fair harp to divers tones,
> That men may rise, on stepping stones
> Of their dead selves, to higher things."

This sublime confidence of the Little Flower in Divine Providence and her inclination to see God's special love in every detail, shines out from page after page of her charming Autobiography. Even in the stars she read God's love for her. Telling of the charming way in which her family used to spend their Sundays, and recalling the tranquil walks in the evening, when her father would come to bring her home from the customary visit to her aunt, she says, in a passage also quoted before in another connection, "About eight o'clock Papa used to come and take me home. Then I remember how I used to regard the stars with an inexpressible joy. Above all there was in the deep firmament one group of pearls of gold [it was the sword belt of the constellation Orion] which I noticed with delight, finding it very like the shape of a 'T' ⁂ and I used to say to my dear father on the way home, 'Look Papa, *my name is written in the sky!*'"

She realized keenly how kind was God's providence to her in surrounding her from the beginning with this affection and tender care, which was needful for her loving and sensitive nature to develop as

God wished into a heroic love of Him. In the third chapter of her Autobiography she tells of her going to school at the age of eight and a half years.

"I was put," she says, "in a class of students who were all older than I. One of them, who was fourteen years old, had little intelligence, but she knew nevertheless how to impose upon the other girls. When she saw that I was so young, and still was always first in composition and cherished by all the Sisters, she began to be jealous and made me pay for my little successes in a thousand ways. With my timid and sensitive nature, I did not know how to defend myself, and I contented myself with crying, without saying a word. Céline, as well as you, my Mother in religion, was ignorant of my distress, but I did not have enough virtue to lift myself above these miseries, and my poor little heart suffered very much.

"Each evening, happily, I went home and then my spirit would expand with joy. I would leap upon the knees of Papa, telling him of the marks given me, and his kiss made me forget all my sufferings. With what joy I announced to him the results of my first composition. I had gained the maximum mark possible and for my recompense I received a pretty little piece of silver coin which I put in my money box for the poor, and which was destined to receive almost every Thursday a new companion. Ah," she continues, "I had a real need to be spoiled in this way! It was very useful for the Little Flower to plunge its tender roots often into the beloved and

chosen soil of family life, for she did not find anywhere else the sap necessary for her subsistence."

The partings when her sisters entered the convent caused her, as we have described, the greatest agony, yet even in those early years she bore it with resignation to the most holy will of God. Pauline had promised her, when she entered the convent, to take her along. She took this promise in earnest, and so her grief was all the greater when she overheard Pauline talking to Marie about soon entering the Carmel. "How can I describe," she says, "the anguish of my heart?" Yet this very anguish revealed to her life as it is indeed, full of sufferings and continual separations. Her sister explained to her the life of the cloister, and her little heart recognized that here was the vocation which God wished her to follow. She felt it with so much force that there was not the least doubt left in her mind. This was no childish dream, she declares, but the certainty of a divine call.

Little Theresa was at that time only nine years of age, yet her abandonment to the will of God was singularly great, even in those tender years. She forthwith made arrangements to visit the Superior of the Carmelites, and from that day she spared no effort to gain the desired favor of entering the Carmel even before the usual age at which postulants are received.

As we have pointed out before, the contemplative vocation might seem in some sort to our human shortness of vision have been less suited than the

active life of religion to the natural disposition of the Little Flower. She was extremely attractive and was possessed of an energy and charm which might have been expected to produce much fruit for souls in the active life. She had, besides, immense desires of accomplishing great things for God; she wished to be an apostle, and the fervor of her apostolic spirit has been likened to that of St. Paul. She yearned to help the souls for whom Christ had died, and there was no apostolic work but what she would have willingly embraced it, for her desire was insatiable to save the souls of men.

Yet in the cloister she could accomplish directly none of the things she desired. She could only suffer and pray and, though she does not say so, it may have been to her something of a sacrifice to give up the opportunities of the active life, though she deeply prized and thoroughly realized the excellence of the contemplative vocation.

Yet it never occurred to her to wish that God had given her another vocation than the one she had received. So as soon as she realized that God was calling her to the Carmel of Lisieux, she bent every energy and all the strength of her will to accomplish His desires. When she had succeeded in gaining admittance to that holy cloister, she never gave a thought to the opportunities she had left behind of working actively in the white vineyards of Christ. She devoted herself to the vocation of apostolic prayer and lived only to love, to suffer and to intercede, so that after her death she might let fall on

the world the shower of roses which God desired to pour down on mankind by her hands.

Even her intense desire to spend her eternity in helping mankind arose from the conviction that this was the will of God. During her last days, her sisters have recorded that she was keenly aware of this splendid destiny. "The most surprising thing about her was," they say, "that she seemed to be conscious of the mission for which Our Lord had sent her here below. The veil of the future seemed to have fallen before her, and more than once she revealed its secrets in prophecies which are already realized. 'I have never given to the good God anything but love,' she said, in that oft-quoted prophecy, 'and He will give me love back again. After my death I will let fall a shower of roses.' "

On another occasion, when one of her Sisters was speaking to her about the happiness of heaven, she declared, "I feel that my mission is about to begin, my mission to make others love the good God as I love Him . . . to give my little way to souls. I wish to pass my heaven in doing good on earth. That is not impossible, because even in the midst of the beatific vision the angels watch over us." She then declared that she did not intend to take any rest until the end of the world. Only when the angel should say "time is no more" would she be able to take repose and to rejoice, for the number of the elect would be full.

This same intense desire to practise herself and to teach to others the lesson of abandonment to the

will of God found its expression in her most characteristic teaching, the teaching of spiritual childhood which she described as the "way of trust and of absolute self-surrender." She wished, as she told her sisters, to encourage everyone to offer up to Jesus, "the flowers of little sacrifices." These little sacrifices are little acts of self-abandonment, the acceptance of little sufferings, the foregoing of little pleasures, the performance of little services, from the motive of a great and pure love of God. This was the characteristic of her own life, which therefore seems so simple and uneventful, yet with every one of these little sacrifices she practised and increased in her chosen virtue of self-surrender and of abandonment. It is this lesson she would also teach to all who desire to imitate her sublime holiness.

Here again her teaching is singularly suited to the needs of the present time. There are many souls who would be able to make great progress in holiness if they would take up the practise of frequent, though little, acts of self-surrender and self-abandonment for the love of Christ. They do not realize the paramount importance of the interior life. They wish to do great things for God, perhaps, and neglect to do the little things. They are intent on imaginary accomplishments in the future and overlook the little flowers which strew their path, which they can pluck at any moment by little acts of sacrifice and self-denial done with great love, for the pure service of God.

The Little Flower was likewise wonderfully obedi-

ent to the will of God manifested to her through those who had a right to rule her in God's name. Her obedience to her father and to her sisters is manifested in many incidents of her Autobiography. She accepted their instructions with the greatest gratitude and affection, she gave them back the most devoted love for the kindness which they showed to her. She was docile to all their admonitions, she tried with all her might to please them in every way by her success at school, by her conduct at home, by all the details of her little life.

Entered into the convent, she accepted with no less abandonment of her own will and desires the guidance of her Superiors. It was one of the delights of the religious life for her that she could perfectly conform to the will of God by obedience to her Superiors. "O my God," she says, "from what inquietudes we deliver ourselves in making the vow of obedience, how happy simple Religious are! Their sole guide being the will of Superiors, they are always sure of following the right path, having no fear of making a mistake even when it seems to them certain that their Superiors are making a mistake.

"But when they cease to consult the unerring compass, then at once their soul goes astray in barren ways where the waters of grace soon fail them. Dear Mother," she continues, addressing her religious Superior, "you are the compass Jesus has given me to direct me safely to the eternal shore. How sweet

it is to me to fix my gaze upon you and then to accomplish the will of Our Lord.

"When He permitted me," she continues, "to suffer temptations against the Faith, the divine Master increased very much in my heart the spirit of faith, which made me see Him living in your soul and communicating to you His blessed orders. I know well, my Mother, that you make the yoke of obedience sweet and light for me; but it seems to me, according to my inmost sentiments, that I should not change my conduct and that my filial tenderness would not suffer any lessening if you were pleased to treat me severely, because I should still see the will of my God manifesting itself in another way for the greater good of my soul."

In a later passage she speaks of the detachment which Our Lord has taught her, and the self-abandonment she has learned from Him in dealing with others. "See," she says, "what Jesus taught me once again. *'Give to everyone that asketh thee and of him that taketh away thy goods, ask them not again'* (Luke vi. 30). To give to all those who ask is far less pleasant than to offer of one's own accord from the natural impulse of one's heart.

"Again, if anyone asks with kindness, it is easy to give; but if by unhappy chance someone uses words which are not very courteous, then the soul rebels when it is not confirmed in perfect charity. It chooses then a thousand reasons for refusing what is asked in that way, and it is only after having convinced the asker of his discourtesy, that one gives

A Scene in Lisieux

(*Photograph by the Author*)

as though one were doing a great favor. Or, one gives a little service which it takes twenty times less time to perform, than it did to argue about the difficulty of rendering it and about imaginary obstacles."

It was not without struggles that the Little Flower succeeded in abandoning herself to the little sacrifices which Our Lord offered her day by day. "For instance," she says, "when I get ready to paint, if I find the brushes in disorder, if a ruler or a penknife has disappeared, my patience is very near giving way, and I have to take hold of it with both hands so as not to demand with bitterness the objects which I lack. I may no doubt request these indispensable necessities, but if I do it with humility, I do not transgress the commandment of Jesus. On the contrary, I act as the poor do who stretch out their hands to receive the necessaries of life. If they are refused, they are not surprised, because no one owes them anything.

"Ah," she goes on, "what peace inundates the soul when she lifts herself above the feelings of nature! No, there is no joy comparable to that which the truly poor in spirit enjoy.

"If such a one asks with detachment for a necessary thing, and if not only is that thing refused but an attempt is made to take away what he already possesses, he follows the advice of Our Lord, *'If any man will take thy coat, let him have thy cloak also'* (MATTHEW v. 40). To give up one's cloak is, it seems to me, to renounce one's last rights, to con-

sider oneself as the servant, the slave of others. When one has left this cloak it is easier to run, and so Jesus adds, *'And whosoever shall force thee to go one mile, go with him other two.'* No, it is not enough for me to give to whosoever asks of me; I ought to anticipate the wishes of others, to show myself very much obliged, very much honored, to give them service; and if they take anything that has been given for my use, I ought to be happy to be relieved of it."

It was in such little sacrifices and through such little practises of self-abandonment that the Little Flower acquired the perfection of this virtue, for virtues grow by practise, and though the opportunity of great sacrifices may come rarely, every day is filled with chances for little ones, offered to Our Lord with great and burning love.

As to the self-abandonment which the Little Flower practised all her life long, in conformity to the will of God and obedience to the inspirations of divine grace, she herself witnesses may times to her fidelity in this regard, in those frank and simple revelations of her own soul which she made in her Autobiography out of obedience to her Superiors. We have repeated at the beginning of this chapter the witness she bore to one of her Sisters who said to her, "But have you not always been faithful to the favors of God?" "Yes," she replied, "from the age of three I have never refused our good God anything." Her whole life was a constant practise of this fidelity to the inspirations of divine grace. Her

countless little acts of inward mortification were in response to the inward inspirations by which the Holy Spirit asked of her now one, now another act of conformity to the will of God. It was so she gathered together the great store of merit which has won for her so marvelous an apostolic career after her death.

"If I had to live longer," she said, "the office of infirmarian would be the one which would please me most. I should not wish to ask for it, but if it came to me directly from obedience, I should think myself very happy. It seems to me that I should fulfill its duties with a tender love, thinking always of what Our Lord said, 'I was sick and you visited Me' (MATTHEW xxv. 36). The bell of the infirmary ought to be for you a heavenly melody. You ought to pass purposely under the windows of the sick so as to give them a chance to call you and to ask services of you.

"Should you not consider yourself as a little slave whom all the world has a right to command? If you could only see the angels, who, from the height of heaven, look upon you as you fight in the arena! They wait for the end of your conflict to cover you with flowers and with crowns. You know well that we claim to be little martyrs—we must win our crowns! The good God," she continues, "does not despise these struggles of ours, hidden and for that so much the more meritorious. 'The patient man is better than the valiant, and he that ruleth his spirit than he that taketh cities' (PROVERBS xvi. 32).

"By our little acts of charity, practised in the shadow, we convert souls from afar, we help the missionaries, we gain for them abundant alms and in that way we build true dwellings, spiritual and material, for Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament" [italics ours].

This last paragraph is the explanation of the apostolic career of the Little Flower, which so wonderfully goes on after her death and will no doubt continue for ages still to come. She learnt the lesson of self-abandonment, she appreciated the value which God gives to little acts of sacrifice done with great love. May she obtain for us the same blessed realization, the same grace to see God's will in all things and follow it, to be like little children in the hands of those who have a right to command us in His name, to be faithful always to the inspirations of His holy grace!

CHAPTER XI

FAITH, HOPE AND LOVE

THE life of the Little Flower is a shining example of the power of faith, of hope and of love to make a soul illustrious and beautiful in God's eyes. Faith in the word of God, in His power and goodness, in His constant interest in ourselves, in all His divine attributes and in all He has revealed and teaches through the Catholic Church, is the foundation of all holiness. In proportion as our faith is vivid, deep, strong and realizing, in that proportion we shall prize spiritual things and mount up on wings of prayer toward God. Without strong and realizing faith, the next world will not appeal to us, its immense rewards will not move us; nay, even the goodness of God will not come home to us unless we believe the word of God and make real to ourselves what He has taught us and what His Church declares.

So, too, a mighty and constant hope is essential to sanctity. Hope is an infused virtue by which the soul, knowing from almighty God the promises He has made and the rewards He offers us, and believing these things, conceives a confident expectation, with the help of God, of reaching everlasting happi-

ness, as well as of receiving from God all the necessary means of securing it. Because God is so good in Himself, we desire to possess Him eternally. Because God is so good to us, so faithful to His promises, so almighty and all-merciful, we rely on Him to help us to do all that is necessary for attaining heaven. This desire and constant expectation, based on supernatural motives, and grounded on the revelation of God as taught to us by the Church, is the virtue of Hope.

Charity is love, the love of God above all things for Himself, and the love of our own selves and of our neighbor for the sake of God. When this love is based on revelation and proceeds from the infused virtue of charity, it is a supernatural act, most meritorious in the sight of God. Our Lord has summed up the commandment of this love of God and the neighbor when He says: "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with thy whole heart, with thy whole mind and with thy whole soul and with all thy strength. This is the greatest and the first commandment; and the second is like unto this: Thou shalt love they neighbor as thyself" (MATTHEW xxii. 37).

Faith, hope and charity all have God for their object, and at Baptism the virtues of faith, hope and charity are infused into the soul by almighty God. These virtues transform and elevate the soul so as to make it capable of performing supernatural actions of faith, of hope and of love. Though a gift of God, these virtues are increased by practise.

Thus, every time we make an Act of Faith, our virtue of faith grows greater, and so for the other virtues.

Having to do directly with God, the exercise of these virtues is sublimely meritorious. To increase in them is to increase in holiness. When we possess faith, hope and love to an heroic degree and exercise them constantly, we are worthy of being called truly holy.

All Catholics, indeed, when in the state of grace, possess these virtues, but not all have them in the same degree of perfection. There are many who believe, but seldom exercise the virtue of faith. Their faith is torpid, dormant, unrealizing. They fail to bring home to themselves the significance of what they believe. So too they possess hope, but exercise it very seldom. They have small confidence in God and expect comparatively little of Him. The greatness of His rewards and the certainty of His assistance stir them but little to acts of supernatural hope.

It is the same with charity. Many Catholics allow their love of God to remain weak and imperfect. They do not exercise their hearts in immense and repeated acts of love. Their love for God and for their neighbor is not the great, overmastering motive of their lives. They remain selfish and self-centered, never bringing to perfection the splendid virtue of charity which they received at Baptism.

One reason for this neglect of the exercise of the

virtues of faith, hope and charity is that good Catholics fail to realize the immense value of these virtues and the unspeakable blessings which they bring to the soul. Here again the teaching of the Little Flower will help us to appreciate these precious possessions which we have received freely from God but which we must cultivate by our own efforts and bring to perfection by repeated acts of virtue.

The faith of St. Theresa was a very vivid and realizing faith. It is one thing to believe, another deeply to realize the meaning of what we believe and to make our faith a living influence in our lives. "Faith," St. Paul tells us, "is the substance of things to be hoped for, the evidence of things that appear not" (Hebrews xi. 1). When we believe on the word of God, we take as true what He tells us, not because of our own direct knowledge, but because of the confidence which we have in the word of God. Hence faith gives us assurance of many things impossible for us to know from our own unaided reason or observation. It makes the unseen world real to us, gives us knowledge of the life after death, teaches us the love and providence of God and enables us to live an unworldly life guided by supernatural principles and motived by the love and service of God. Faith makes the heavenly rewards which are in store for us, real and near. If we live a life of faith, we live according to unworldly standards, acting not for this earth, but for heaven.

No one can read the Autobiography of the Little

Flower without being impressed by the vivid realization of her faith, the depth and liveliness of her hope and the fervor of her charity. She was forever in the presence of the unseen realities of which faith gives testimony. The world to her was only an antechamber of heaven, its beauties were but signs and hints of the Eternal Beauty. She saw in all its loveliness, not an abiding habitation, but a place of exile and preparation where one might learn something from the passing and created beauties of earth, of the everlasting and uncreated loveliness of God. In her early youth, the Little Flower had the great blessing of a thorough Catholic education. She was surrounded by an atmosphere of faith from her earliest years. Her father, her mother and her sisters gave her instructions in Catholic doctrine and at the same time their example and the contagious influence of their own deep belief implanted in her soul the most fervent faith.

She learned that everything comes from the hand of God, that whatever happens is a manifestation of His will, that He has constant care of us and that we must in all things abandon ourselves to His good pleasure and only have care to love Him as much as we can, and to accomplish His desires to the utmost of our powers.

In her Autobiography St. Theresa has recorded some of her early teachings. "Pauline," she says, "received my most intimate confidence, she cleared up all my doubts. One day I expressed my surprise

to her that the good Lord did not give an equal glory in heaven to all the elect. I was afraid that they would not all be happy. Then she sent me to bring Papa's big glass and put it alongside of my little thimble. Filling both with water she asked me which seemed to be fuller. I told her that one looked to me as full as the other and that it was impossible to pour more water into either of them for they could not hold any more. My little mother then made me understand that in heaven the least of the elect will not envy the happiness of the greater. In this way, bringing the highest mysteries to the level of my comprehension, she gave to my soul the nourishment which it needed."

At the same time her little heart was being taught the ways of divine love. Hers was an ambitious and aspiring nature, and she herself declares how much she owed to the early training which turned these qualities into the desires of heavenly perfection. Speaking of her earliest years, she says, "I had another fault of which Mama does not speak in her letters. It was a great self-love. Here are two examples of it. One day, wishing no doubt to learn how far my pride would go, she said to me, smiling, 'My little Theresa, if you will kiss the ground I will give you a penny.' In those days a penny was for me a whole fortune. To gain it, under the circumstances, I had no need to abase my grandeur very much for my little height did not put a very great distance between me and the ground. Just the same

my pride was up in arms, and holding myself very erect, I said to Mama, 'Oh, no, my dear mother, I would rather not have the penny.'

"Another time," she continues, "we were going into the country to visit some friends. Mama said to Marie that she was to put on my prettiest clothes, but not to leave my arms bare. I did not breathe a word, but showed the indifference which children of that age usually feel, while within myself I said, 'Just the same, I should have looked much prettier with my little arms bare.' " These are slight indications, of course, but St. Theresa considers them an index to her character. "With such a disposition," she says, "I am perfectly aware that if I had been brought up by parents without virtue I should have become very wicked and perhaps should have lost my soul."

But Jesus watched over His little spouse. He made all her faults turn to her advantage. Checked early in life, they helped her to increase in perfection. "In fact," she continues, "since I had a great self-love and also a love of what was good, it was enough if anyone said to me once, 'You must not do such and such a thing,' to take away from me all wish to do it again. I see with pleasure," she goes on, "in the letters of my dear mother, that as I increased in age, I gave her more consolation. Since I had under my eyes only good examples, I naturally wished to follow them. This is what she wrote in 1876. 'Even Theresa wishes to take part in making sacrifices.

Marie has given her little sister a string of beads, made on purpose to count their acts of self-denial. They carry on together real spiritual conferences which are very amusing. Céline said the other day, "How can it be that the good Lord is in such a little host?" Theresa answered her, "That is not so surprising because the good Lord is almighty." "And what does that mean, that He is almighty?" "That means that He can do anything that He wishes." But it is more amusing still, to see Theresa put her hand hundreds times of the day into her little pocket to pull down a bead of her string every time that she makes a sacrifice!'"

In such manner the virtues of faith, hope and charity were cultivated in the heart of the Little Flower even when she was a very young child. In after times these early dispositions flowered forth in greater acts of sacrifice and love. She herself tells how her vocation of after days was shadowed forth in her childhood. "One day," she says, "Léonie, thinking no doubt that she was too big to play with dolls, brought us both a basket filled with doll clothes, with pretty pieces of stuff and trifles. She had laid her doll upon the basket and said, 'Here, my little sisters, choose what you like.' Céline looked at it and then took a ball of wool. After a moment of reflection I put out my hand in my turn and said, 'I choose everything,' and I carried away both doll and basket without any more ceremony.

"This trait of my childhood is like a summary of

my whole life. Later on, when perfection was opened out before me, I understood that to become a saint it was necessary to suffer much, to seek always what was most perfect, and forget oneself. I understood that in sanctity there are numerous degrees, that each soul is free to respond to the advances of Our Lord, to do little or much for His love; in a word, to choose between sacrifices which He asks. Then, as in the days of my childhood, I cried out, 'My God, I choose everything, I do not wish to be a saint by halves. I am not afraid to suffer for You. I fear only one thing. It is, to keep my own will. Take it, for I choose all that You will.' "

This spirit of faith and hope and love thus early implanted in the heart of the Little Flower increased and grew with her days. In the fourth chapter of her Autobiography, she says: "I have not yet spoken of my love for pictures and books, and yet, my dear Mother in religion, I owe to the beautiful pictures which you used to show me, some of the sweetest joys and the strongest impressions which have stirred me up to the practise of virtue. I used to forget the hours in looking at them. For example, the one called 'The Little Flower of the Divine Prisoner,' suggested to me so many things, that I would remain plunged in a sort of ecstasy before it. I offered myself to Jesus to be His Little Flower, I wished to console Him, to draw as near as possible to the tabernacle, to be looked at, cultivated and gathered by Him.

"As I did not care to play," she goes on, "I should have liked to pass my life in reading. Happily I had to guide me visible angel guardians who chose for me books which were suitable to my age, fit to give me recreation while at the same time they nourished my mind and my heart. I was allowed to use only a limited time for this favorite recreation, and this became the occasion of much self-sacrifice, because as soon as the hour was passed, I thought it my duty to leave off immediately even in the midst of the most interesting passage.

"So far as the impression produced by this reading goes," she continues, "I must confess that in perusing certain tales of chivalry I did not always understand the realities of life. So, in my admiration of the patriotic actions of the heroines of France, especially of the Venerable Joan of Arc, I felt a great desire to imitate her. I received then the grace which I have always considered as one of the greatest in my life, for at that age I was not favored with lights from on high as I am to-day. Jesus made me understand that the sole glory is that which lasts forever, and that to achieve it, it is not necessary to do shining deeds, but rather to hide oneself from the eyes of others and of oneself so that the left hand may not know what the right hand does. Reflecting then that I was born for glory, and considering how I could achieve it, it was interiorly disclosed to me that my glory would never come beneath the eyes of mortals, but that it would consist in becoming a saint.

"This desire," she goes on, "may seem rash if one considers how imperfect I was, and am even now, after so many years spent in religion. Still, I always feel the same audacious confidence of becoming a great saint. I do not rely on my virtues, because I have none, but I hope in Him who is Virtue and Holiness Itself. It is He alone, who, satisfied with my feeble efforts, will lift me even to Himself, will cover me with His merits, and will make me a saint."

The instructions of her sister Marie stirred up in the heart of the Little Flower the flames of faith and hope and love. "Marie," she says, speaking of the days that followed Pauline's entrance into the convent, "took Pauline's place for me. Each evening I spent a long time with her, eager to hear her words. What beautiful things she said to me! It seemed to me that all her heart, so great, so generous, passed into me. As the warriors of old taught their children the manual of arms, so she taught me the combat of life, stirring up my ardor and showing me the glorious palm of victory. She spoke to me, too, of the immortal riches which it is so easy to amass each day, and of the misfortune it is to trample them under foot when we have, as it were, only to stoop down to gather them. How eloquent was this dear sister! I would have liked not to be alone in hearing her profound teaching. I thought in my simplicity that the greatest sinners would have been converted had they heard her, and that, leaving their perishable

riches, they would no longer have sought any but the riches of heaven.

"At this period," she continues, "it would have been very sweet to me to make mental prayer, but Marie, finding me pious enough, allowed me only to say vocal prayers. One day at school one of my teachers asked me what I did on holidays when I remained at Les Buissonnets. I answered timidly, 'I often go and hide myself in a little empty space in my room which I can easily cut off with the curtains of my bed and there *I think.*' 'But what do you think of?' asked the good nun, laughing. 'I think about the good God, about the shortness of life, and about eternity—in a word *I think!*' My teacher did not forget this and later on she loved to recall to me the time when *I thought,* and she would ask me *if I still thought.* I know now that I used really to make a meditation in which the divine Master sweetly instructed my heart."

The preparation for her First Communion and especially the Retreat served of course to increase the fervor of the Little Flower. Needless to say, the day of her First Communion was one of immense graces. "At last," she says, "the most beautiful day of all the days of my life dawned for me. What unspeakably precious remembrances the least details of those heavenly hours have left in my soul! The joyful awakening at dawn, the tender and respectful kisses of the teachers and my elder companions, the room filled with snow-white dresses in one of which each

child was clad in turn; above all, the entrance into the chapel and the singing of the morning hymn, 'O holy altar, with the angels 'round!' But I would not and could not tell you all. These things would lose their perfume were they exposed to the air. There are inward thoughts which may not be translated into the language of earth without losing their profound and celestial meaning.

"Ah! how sweet was the first kiss of Jesus in my soul. It was indeed a kiss of love! I felt that I was loved and I said in turn, 'I love You, and I give myself to You forever!' Jesus did not make any request of me, He asked no sacrifice. For a long time He and Little Theresa had already looked upon and understood each other. That day our meeting could no longer be called a simple look, but a fusion. We were no longer two. Theresa had disappeared like the drop of water which loses itself in the bosom of the ocean, Jesus remained alone; He was the Master, the King! Had not Theresa asked Him to take away her liberty? That liberty made her afraid. She felt herself so feeble, so fragile, that she wished forever to unite herself to the divine Strength."

Later on, in the same chapter, she describes the Act of Consecration to the Blessed Virgin which she read in the name of her companions. "In the afternoon," she says, "I read in the name of my companions the Act of Consecration to the Blessed Virgin. My teachers chose me no doubt because I had been

deprived of my earthly mother at so early an age. Ah! I put my whole heart into my Consecration to the Virgin Mary, asking her to watch over me! It seems to me that she looked on her Little Flower with love and smiled back at her. I remembered her visible smile which once had cured and delivered me. I knew well what I owed to her. Had she not herself come on this morning of the 9th of May to place in the cup of my soul her Jesus, the Flower of the fields and the Lily of the valleys?"

She soon consecrated herself in a still more special way to the Blessed Virgin by becoming a Sodalist. It was on the 31st of May, 1886, that this event occurred. The chapel of the Sodality where she made her Act of Consecration is kept as a place of pilgrimage and when visiting it, at the convent of the Benedictines, one looks through a glass partition at the little altar with its statue of the Blessed Mother.

"Meanwhile," she says, "I resolved to consecrate myself most especially to the Blessed Virgin by seeking admission into the Children of Mary. To gain this privilege I had to go twice a week to the convent, and this cost me something, I confess, because of my great timidity. I loved my good teachers very much, of course, and I always felt a lively gratitude toward them, but as I have already said, I never had, like other old pupils, a favorite teacher with whom I could have passed many hours. So I used to work in silence till the end of the lesson and then, as no one took any notice of me. I used to go up to the

tribune of the chapel until the hour when Papa came to take me home." When the present writer visited the school where the Little Flower was a Sodalist, he was shown the Sodality chapel, and the old Sister portress, who still opens the door as she did when St. Theresa was a pupil there, related that whenever her father came to fetch his little daughter home, it was in the tribune of the chapel that she used to go to look for her.

So, watched over by a special providence of God, and corresponding with rare fidelity to His inspirations, the Little Flower increased in faith, in hope and in love. Time and again in her Autobiography we can trace the growth of these virtues in the account she gives of her own interior life.

Thus, she says in chapter eight: "In the year 1895 I received the grace to understand more than ever how much Jesus desires to be loved. Thinking one day about the souls which offer themselves as victims to the justice of God, so as to turn away the punishments reserved for sinners by drawing them on themselves, I found this offering great and generous, but I was very far from feeling myself willing to make it. 'O my divine Master!' I cried, in the depths of my heart, 'is it only Your justice which is to receive the victims of the holocaust? Has not Your merciful love also need of victims? On all sides it is unknown, rejected . . . the hearts to which you wish to give it, turn toward creatures, asking of them happiness in the miserable satisfaction of a moment,

instead of casting themselves into Your arms, into the delicious furnace of Your infinite love. O my God, must Your love, disdained, remain in Your Heart? It seems to me that if You were to find souls offering themselves as victims of holocaust to Your love, You would consume them swiftly, that You would be happy not to repress the flames of infinite tenderness which are imprisoned in You. * * * O Jesus! let me be that happy victim, consume Your little holocaust with the fire of divine Love!'

"My Mother," she continues, "you who have permitted me to offer myself in this way to our dear Lord, you know the streams or rather the oceans of graces which inundated my soul immediately after I made that act of self-surrender on the 9th of June, 1895. Ah! since that day love penetrates me and surrounds me! At every instant this merciful Love renews me, purifies me, and leaves in my soul no trace of sin."

This fervor of faith, hope and love continued to increase until it found its climax in the last illness and death of St. Theresa. She describes the first intimation she had that her end was near, "During Lent," she says, "of last year, I found myself stronger than ever and this strength continued perfect until Easter, despite the fast which I observed in all its rigor. Then, in the early hours of Good Friday, Jesus gave me the hope of going soon to join Him in His beautiful heaven. Oh, how sweet the remembrance is to me! Thursday night, as I did not have

permission to remain at the altar of respose the whole night long, I returned to our cell at midnight. Scarcely was my head laid on the pillow when I felt a boiling flood mount up to my lips. I thought that I was going to die and my heart nearly burst with joy. Still, as I had just put out our little lamp, I mortified my curiosity until morning and fell tranquilly asleep. At five o'clock, when the signal to rise was given, I thought at once that I had some happy news to learn, and drawing near the window I verified this by finding our handkerchief soaked with blood. O my mother, what a hope! I was intimately persuaded that my Well-Beloved, on this anniversary day of His death, let me hear a first summons like a sweet and distant murmur which announced to me His happy coming."

It requires vivid faith, serene hope, and ardent charity thus to welcome so joyfully the coming of death. She watched its approach with calm assurance and offered her sufferings cheerfully to her Beloved. Even the dark night of the soul which settled about her did not discourage her. With simplicity and confidence she went on from day to day trying always to grow more and more pure and fervent in her love, stronger in faith, more confirmed in hope. On the day of her death, her words summed up this holocaust of love. "At last," says her biography, continued by her sisters, "there broke the dawn of eternal day. It was Thursday the 30th of September. During the morning our sweet victim, speaking of

her last night of exile, looked at the statue of Mary and said, 'Oh, how I have prayed to her and with what fervor, but I am in pure agony without any mixture of consolation. . . The air of the earth fails me; when shall I breathe the air of heaven?' At half-past two o'clock, she lifted herself up on her bed, a thing which she had not been able to do for several weeks, and she cried out, 'My Mother, the chalice is full to the brim! No, I would never have believed that it was possible to suffer so much. I cannot explain it except because of my extreme desire to save souls.' "

A little while afterward she said, "Everything that I have written about my wish to suffer, oh, it is very true! I am not sorry that I gave myself entirely over to Love." She repeated these last words several times and then asked her Superior, "My Mother, prepare me to die well."

"My child," said the Prioress, "you are all ready to appear before God because you have always understood the virtue of humility." Then she gave this beautiful testimony of herself. "Yes," she cried out, "I know it, my soul has never sought anything but the truth. Yes, I have understood humility of heart!"

At seven o'clock that evening the Community had been assembled, the Angelus had rung, the last moments of this blessed life were ebbing away. Turning to her Mother Prioress the Little Flower asked,

"My Mother, is not this the agony? Am I not going to die?"

"Yes, my child, it is your agony, but perhaps Jesus wishes to prolong it for some hours."

Then she said in a resigned tone, "Very well, let it be so. Oh! I would not wish to suffer less! Then looking at her crucifix, she uttered her last words, 'Oh! I love Him, my God, I . . . love . . . You!'" These were her last words. Scarcely had she pronounced them when she suddenly fainted away, her head leaned to the right in the attitude of the virgin martyrs who offered themselves to the sword, or rather, as her Autobiography says, "Like a victim of love awaiting the burning arrow of the heavenly Archer which was to end her life." The last words of the Little Flower were an act of love. They consummated that life of ardent faith, of burning hope and of fervent charity which, though brief on earth, will be full of endless fruits for heaven. May she obtain for us all the wisdom and the grace to lead such a life of faith and hope and love, that we may have such a happy death and enjoy such a glorious and serene eternity!

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GARESCHÉ, E.F.
AUTHOR
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